

LIZ GERARD EVEN THE PM'S FAN CLUB IS COLLAPSING

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STEVE RICHARDS ON THE NEXT

CRISIS TO BULLDOZE BRITAIN



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Brexit Britain just budged

Andrew Adonis



Back in Brexitland, the real story isn't Boris Johnson's theatrical refusal to apply for an extension. It was his announcement last week that there would be no customs regime for imports from the EU when the current 'stand-still' ends in December and customs tariffs and inspections become liable.

This is untenable. It either leads in the autumn to a last-minute extension of the stand-still 'transition period', called by some other name. Or it leads to a quick economic deal which, because this is the only deal which the EU will do quickly, maintains the status quo on things that matter to the EU (low or zero tariffs on physical exports and imports between the EU and Britain) while allowing Britain greater leeway to depart over time from EU single market regulatory rules on business and financial services and to tax them.

The key point is that the net gainer from a deal on these lines will be the EU, since the balance of trade is heavily in the EU's favour in physical goods but heavily in Britain's favour on business and financial services.

Oh and if there is a deal, most of the media attention will be taken up by fish. The deal will contain lots of references to 'freedom from the Common Fisheries Policy' while Johnson agrees to broadly the status quo.

So from now on, ignore the language of 'extension', 'deal' and 'no-deal'. Be mindful of what Humpty Dumpty said "in a rather scornful tone": "When I use a word it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less." "The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things." "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master – that's all."

The reason why there has to be a deal on these lines, or some renamed extension, is very simple. A hard border for physical goods, involving customs duties and checks, simply can't be introduced by the British state in time for the end of December.

It doesn't matter whether Johnson and Cummings want to have such a border. If they tried to decree it, it wouldn't happen because there isn't the administrative and organisational capacity in Whitehall to make it happen amidst Covid-19.

"Who stirs?" are to my mind the two most significant words of King Lear. The enfeebled king, shorn of his domains, barks instructions but there is no one to implement them. This is the position Johnson and Cummings are now in, as the lockdown approaches its fourth month and the British economy disintegrates.

Without customs border infrastructure there can't be 'no deal', because 'no deal' can't be implemented. But equally, under international trade law there can't be zero EU tariffs by unilateral British decision unless all equivalent tariffs to other countries are also reduced to zero. This undermines future trade negotiations with the US, China and the rest of the world, since we will already have surrendered our negotiation position.

“The major European country which has handled Covid-19 best is Angela Merkel's Germany, and the one which has handled it worst is Johnson's Britain

"Overall this is the most extreme position that Johnson could take, and I cannot quite believe he means it," says Alan Riley, an EU trade expert at the Atlantic Council, a Washington think tank. "That's why I think I am missing something or this is a bluff." He isn't missing something and this is a bluff.

Meanwhile, in the real world, the major European country which has handled Covid-19 best is Angela Merkel's Germany, and the one which has handled it worst is Johnson's Britain. France is somewhere in between.

This isn't just a matter of historical interest. It will vitally affect the economic, diplomatic and political standing of the three foremost European states for the next decade and more.

Its effect will be to make Britain a supplicant to Germany and France, particularly if president Biden takes office next January. It may lead to Brexit being reversed sooner than the conventional wisdom now thinks.

When I pointed this out last week, one of my Twitter followers replied: "How come the Germans do everything better, and when all we have to do is copy them, we fail?"

Therein lies one of the most profound questions of modern British politics.

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AGENDA

Number 10's arrogant mishandling of both Brexit and Covid are combining, to produce dangerous consequences, warns STEVE RICHARDS



There are disturbing parallels between the British government's calamitous approach to the global pandemic and its provocatively arrogant conduct in the Brexit negotiations.

The pandemic has already caused havoc in the UK with the death rate higher than most countries. The Brexit trade talks of multi-layered complexity face a nightmarishly tight deadline of the government's choosing with potentially dire consequences for the economy. On both fronts Boris Johnson and his entourage claim to be more than satisfied with their performance so far.

The coming together of Covid-19 and Brexit was explicit when Johnson made his first big speech on the Brexit trade talks in February. He was the one who made the connection between the two:

"We are starting to hear some bizarre autarkic rhetoric, when barriers are going up, and when there is a risk that new diseases such as coronavirus will trigger a panic and a desire for market segregation that go beyond what is medically rational... Then at that moment humanity needs some government somewhere that is willing at least to make the case powerfully for freedom of exchange, some country ready to take off its Clark Kent spectacles and leap into the phone booth and emerge with its cloak flowing as the supercharged champion, of the right of the populations of the earth to buy and sell freely among each other."

The infamous passage is revealing on so many levels. At a point when the virus was heading towards the UK Johnson loftily regressed responses of other countries as irrational. Many of those countries went on to suffer far fewer deaths and were able to end lockdown more smoothly and earlier. In terms of Brexit the argument was perverse, as Johnson was hailing free trade while taking a hard stand against the EU that risked the imposition of tariffs between the UK and its biggest market.

Above all Johnson's preposterous remarks highlight a British exceptionalism that marked his early approach to the virus and still determines his chosen course in relation to Brexit. In No.10 they see the UK as a "supercharged champion" liberated from Europe, as they once saw the UK as being uniquely well-placed to deal with a virus that was causing mayhem elsewhere.



Countdown to the cliff edge starts again.. and it's riskier than ever



The key ingredient that fuels this delusion is a wilful determination to ignore evidence. By early March, when coronavirus was declared a global pandemic, equivalent countries to the UK were preparing for strict lockdowns. The UK was an outlier, carrying on as usual at the behest of the libertarians in Downing Street. Those pleading for an earlier lockdown at the time included the chair of the health committee and former health secretary Jeremy Hunt, former cabinet minister Rory Stewart and the shadow health secretary, Jonathan Ashworth.

The outgoing Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn asked persistently why the UK government was taking a different approach to the rest of the world. There were plenty of senior scientists urging an early lockdown too if No.10 had wanted the ammunition to claim they were following "the science".

Johnson, Dominic Cummings and the rest of their entourage thought they knew best in their

early responses to the pandemic. Similarly they are convinced they know best about the consequences of Brexit in spite of the evidence that shows they are about to give the frail UK economy another hit.

Recently the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development forecast a slump in UK national income of 11.5%, the worst of any country in the developed world.

Part of its assessment warned that the failure to conclude a trade deal with the European Union by the end of 2020 or put in place alternative arrangements would have a strongly negative effect on trade and jobs. The position of No.10 is to seek no extension to the trade talks.

Instead of acknowledging the risks of leaving at the end of the year with a flimsy trade deal or no deal at all, the No.10 operation becomes more assertive, mistaking machismo for strength.

Even Johnson's chief Brexit negotiator, the normally reticent David Frost, has become loudly provocative. Last month Frost wrote to Michel Barnier, that some of 'Brussels' proposals were "egregious" and not

what "any democratic country could sign". Barnier's proposals are based on the Political Declaration that Johnson *did* sign last autumn.

Last week Frost tweeted grandly that the UK would seek no extension to the current talks, as if he held all the cards. In reality Frost negotiates on behalf of a small island with a struggling economy against the much bigger EU.

Frost speaks to Cummings several times a week, more than he does to Johnson. He has become another instrument of Cummings' fantasies about "Europe" and how machismo always wins.

No.10 assumes it can intimidate the EU into submission. This delusion is based on a wilful misreading of what happened last autumn when the EU agreed to a Withdrawal Agreement that differed from Theresa May's.

The EU made its move not because Johnson and Cummings were strong but because the duo agreed to accept more or less what the EU had proposed in the first place before May negotiated a better deal.

But the Vote Leave campaign in No.10 only understands what it takes to be



triumphant acts of machismo. The same approach was adopted with the virus in the early stages. While other world leaders went in to lockdown Johnson showed off that he shook hands with people at a hospital where there were patients suffering from the virus.

He ostentatiously ignored social distancing in the House of Commons and elsewhere. The prime minister seemed delighted that in the mighty UK at least people were sticking two fingers up at the virus and still going to race meetings, football matches and crammed pubs.

When the consequences of machismo do not go to plan the government denies any culpability. As the UK death rates soared compared with other countries the global chart was dropped from the daily press conferences.

If the information does not fit the narrative the information is changed. In April Cummings changed an earlier blog to include a section that foresaw the type of pandemic that has struck. In reality, when he made the change the pandemic was already causing seismic chaos.

If Brexit causes further chaos at the start of next year the government will change its narrative. Now it hails a liberated UK. If instead there is chaos it will blame Covid.

There have been several indications that some in No.10 conclude there is no better time to end the trade talks. The tragedy of Covid will be used as a protective shield for the turmoil of Brexit.

But sometimes the fantasies of the eternal campaigners in Downing Street are forced to face the realities of Covid and Brexit. Then they become confused revolutionaries.

After Johnson's glamorous early assertiveness of urging people to carry on as normal he imposed belatedly a lockdown. Similarly he has changed tack on quarantines, the use of masks, schools' opening, NHS fees for foreign workers, the significance of testing and much more.

On Brexit, when faced with the question of how to manage the border with the EU without the promised 50,000 UK customs agents in place and without building any of the planned customs sheds there came a sheepish answer: The UK government proposes that there will not be much of a border, at least temporarily.

This was not an expedient compromise, but a clash with reality. UK businesses already dealing with the desperate consequences of Covid were not ready and the government's preparations were predictably behind schedule. Ironically and again predictably EU members are better prepared for border controls than the chaotic UK government and they are not the ones seeking a hard Brexit.

The confusion extends to the regulation of food standards. The trade secretary, Liz Truss, once a prominent Remain campaigner, assumed she would speed No.10 evangelists by pursuing speedy talks with the US over a trade deal.

Yet some in government are still supportive of the farming sector that is alarmed by the double whammy of tariffs being imposed on their exports to the EU while the UK is flooded with cheap food from the US. Some of Johnson's revolutionaries curse Truss for her free market evangelism and note that the government is risking all for a trade deal with president Trump who could be gone after the November election. Others hail Truss for valiantly pursuing the logic of Brexit. Johnson and his fellow revolutionaries are bewildered by complexity.

But it is not wise to assume that sensible expediency will prevail in relation to Brexit. They still think they know best and assume critics are stuck in an outdated metropolitan bubble.

They marched close to the cliff's edge in their response to Covid. The cliff's edge is looming with Brexit. They might jump, assuming the UK that won a war in 1945 will land and flourish. Follow the pattern in relation to the virus. If they jump and the economy sinks further they will deny they jumped in the first place.

■ Steve Richards' latest book is *The Prime Ministers - Lessons of Leadership*

TIME'S UP: The Brexit countdown clock projected onto the front of 10 Downing Street shows 00:00 as the time reaches 11pm on January 31

Below left, the government's chief Brexit negotiator David Frost

Photos: Getty Images

We must not give up this fight now

Lib Dem leadership hopeful
LAYLA MORAN on the ongoing battle to avoid no-deal and head-off a damaging Trump trade deal



I have always been a proud European and internationalist. My mother is Palestinian and my father was an EU diplomat, so much of my childhood was spent growing up in Brussels and various countries around the world: Greece, Jordan, Jamaica and Ethiopia, for instance. As a result, I saw first-hand the important work the EU does to provide vital development aid, promoting human rights and democracy and protecting the environment.

So like so many people across the UK, I was heartbroken when the UK voted to leave the European Union four years ago. I very much hope that, in the future, the public will back joining the EU again.

But for me, being part of the EU was always about so much more than the achievements of its political institutions. It was also what it said about our country: one that is open to the world, works with its closest neighbours to tackle shared challenges and gives people the freedom to live, love and work overseas.

Those same values of openness and global cooperation are those that first attracted me to the Liberal Democrats. As party leader, I would ensure that we stood by those values in the years ahead.

For now though, the focus must be on tackling the threat of coronavirus and holding this Conservative government to account. Over the last two years, precious time and resources have been diverted from preparing for a pandemic to planning for no-deal. Even in February of this year, when Covid-19 was rapidly beginning to spread around the world, ministers appeared far more concerned with Brexit than this deadly disease. The government cannot afford to make the same mistake again when people's lives and livelihoods are on the line. The response to the coronavirus must come first.

That means putting people before politics and extending the transition period. Pharmaceutical companies have warned the UK could face shortages of vital medicines if talks with the EU fail, as global supplies remain so low it would be difficult to replenish our stockpiles in time. The business community has also made it clear that many firms simply won't survive if they have to cope with no-deal on top of the damage done by the coronavirus. To any competent and compassionate government, these stark warnings would set alarm bells ringing.

Yet even the threat of medicine shortages has not been enough to make the government change course. Instead, Boris Johnson has stubbornly refused the EU's offer of an extension and is insisting on crashing Britain out at the

end of this year come what may. This would be a monumental act of national self-harm. People and businesses have suffered enough this year. The last thing we need is the chaos of a no-deal Brexit this winter, particularly with the threat of a second wave of coronavirus.

Fortunately, it is not too late to stop it. I am working closely with like-minded MPs across parliament to force the government to stop putting ideology ahead of the national interest and extend the transition period. MPs have not been consulted on Brexit since before the pandemic hit in January. Given the scale of the damage done by coronavirus and the significant public support for an extension, parliament must now be given a say.

It is also crucial that we stop the government from lowering our food standards in their desperation to sign a trade deal with the US. It's not surprising many people are concerned about US foods such as chlorinated chicken and hormone-treated beef entering our supermarkets. We're used to world-leading European standards, and like many I take pride in eating high-quality food grown by our farmers. We must not let Donald Trump rewrite the rulebook that has protected us for decades. I will carry on the fight in parliament to keep substandard foods out of our ports and off our shelves or our school dining tables.

Finally, we need to make sure the UK takes part in EU-wide schemes to procure vital medical equipment such as ventilators and PPE. We can't allow the government to prioritise Brexit over breathing, people's lives and the needs of the NHS must come first. I wrote to the health secretary Matt Hancock back in March, urging him to reverse the short-sighted decision to opt out of these EU joint procurement schemes, which allow countries to pool together to secure much-needed supplies and equipment at a cheaper cost.

Since then the government has relented and agreed to take part in a more recent scheme. We now need to hold their feet to the fire and ensure the UK also takes part in similar joint European initiatives, including to develop and manufacture vaccines and help distribute them to poorer nations around the world.

There's no doubt it's been a difficult few years for pro-Europeans in the UK. But there is still a lot to play for. We can still stop the self-sabotage of a no-deal Brexit at the end of this year by extending the transition period. We can still protect our food standards and farmers from a Trumpian trade deal. And we can continue working with our European neighbours as we emerge from this crisis, including helping to secure global access to a vaccine. Millions of people across the UK still want to see a country that is outward-looking, open and compassionate. I will ensure the Lib Dems provide those people with a political voice.

■ Layla Moran is MP for Oxford West and Abingdon; she is a candidate in the Lib Dem leadership contest

AGENDA

The right-wing press invested so much in getting Boris Johnson into power that they cannot abandon him easily – despite his obvious failure, says LIZ GERARD. At least, not yet...



Nobody likes being taken for a mug. Some shrug off the initial embarrassment and put it down to experience. Like the cat that wasn't really interested in the bird that tweaked its nose and flew away. It always intended just to have a quick wash.

Others go into denial and become belligerent if challenged. "I knew what I was voting for," says the Brexit voter promised that "nothing would change" who now faces having to secure a visa to go on holiday. Or "Yes, they lied. They all lie. I saw beyond that. I voted for sovereignty. I never believed the rest." What they can't stand is the loss of face that goes with acknowledging they fell for a con.

As it is with people, so it is with newspapers. And our right-leaning national newspapers – ie, most of them – put a lot of effort into persuading readers to vote for Boris Johnson.

First as Conservative leader and then as sitting prime minister. Some were desperate for Brexit to be "delivered"; all were desperate to keep Jeremy Corbyn out.

Johnson, they concluded, was the man to sort Brexit, keep the Tories in power and protect their interests. He had his faults, but the people loved him; he was a winner.

That belief has been sorely tested over the past five months. But like our conman's mark, the newspapers find it hard to admit they might have been wrong; that their niggling doubts were not mere trifles. They know they should have listened to their inner voices – or looked across the Atlantic.

The Republican party had wanted nothing to do with Trump, but voters seemed to like him, so it backed him as a winner. Now it's stuck with him, possibly for eight years, and he has proved even more of an embarrassment to the party than it could ever have imagined.

Tory MPs, too, had a distaste for Johnson. But they put on their blinkers and focused on the winning post, blind to

Johnson fan club will eventually run out of members

the way the race was run and the damage and chaos that might follow victory.

On both occasions, there was another player in the background. Just as Rupert Murdoch's *Fox News* helped to propel Trump into the White House, so his UK newspapers helped Johnson into Downing Street.

The *Times*, which found Johnson an unacceptable junior reporter, judged him to be the best man for prime minister. A leading article last year noted the "turmoil in his personal life", "a predilection not to master a policy brief", and a "widely perceived risk...that he would crack under pressure".

Yet it still urged Tory MPs to give him their full support because the alternative was not a more able Conservative leader, but a Corbyn administration.

Or, as the *Sun* put it in a leader headlined "Go-go Bo-Jo": "Corbyn's Stalinist mob are waiting at the door of No.10, desperate to claw their way in."

The *Mail* had qualms, but still backed him; the *Telegraph* and *Express* were unequivocal.

Having won that leadership campaign, Johnson was straight on to the next. The election wasn't to come for five months, but he was on the stump from day one, with the Tory press right alongside him. Forty new hospitals? Splash. Fifty thousand new nurses? Splash. Truss "seals" trade deal with US? Splash. Duty-free zones? Splash. Billions for education? Splash. Not a question asked, hardly a detail examined, barely a counter view considered. It was too easy to take dictation from Dominic Cummings.

Rolling acres of editorial space were

LOSING SUPPORT: Prime minister Boris Johnson visits London's Westfield shopping centre on June 14 to see the coronavirus measures in place ahead of stores reopening

Photo: Getty Images



STANDING BY THEIR MAN





handed over. In the five weeks from Johnson taking office until he (unlawfully) shut down parliament, our national newspapers ran 21 comment pieces by serving ministers, 16 by Conservative MPs and nine by former Tory leaders. (There were a total of five by Labour luminaries.)

That's not counting the "Boris talks to our readers" interviews with friendly newspapers – but strangely not the *Guardian* or *Mirror*.

With so much invested in our very own Magic Johnson, the papers were bound to stick with him for better, for worse – and worse and worse. From lying to the Queen to presiding over the deaths of tens of thousands of her subjects.

As the virus moved across Europe, there was an acceptance both that it would land here and that the government was well-placed to deal with it. In late February, newspapers reported that eight million might end up in hospital, that two million might need intensive care, that half a million might die – almost without recognising that these were people they were writing about.

It was one thing for authorities to prepare for such horrors – so they should – quite another for the press to treat the prospect of such levels of suffering as either inevitable or tolerable. But at this stage, most papers just trusted the government and printed whatever it said (whether officially or in private briefings).

The *Daily Express* told readers in early March: "Nothing can stop virus sweeping Britain". But we were "ready for the worst". There was a "battle plan". Boris would "stop at nothing" to beat virus.

Since then, the paper has been almost admirable in its determination to find the positives in a hellish situation.

Of 80 Covid splash stories to last weekend, 52 were upbeat, including 16 offering hope of a cure, vaccine or tests for millions. "Boris", the hero who would see us through, starred in 15 headlines and his photograph appeared on the front page 33 times.

All this from the paper whose ageing readers are the most vulnerable to the disease; most likely to need social care; most likely to be shut away at home, suffering from loneliness and separation from their families. It's understandable that the *Express* doesn't want to upset them with scare stories, but shouldn't it have asked a few pointed questions on their behalf?

Markets went into freefall, but Rishi Sunak (aka “Dr Feelgood” – *Daily Mail*) was there with a “lifeline” (*Telegraph*) that would put us on the “road to riches” (*Times*).

As the epidemic took hold, the *Daily*

Mail was the first of the loyal camp followers to waken, challenging the government on testing, PPE and care homes. The *Times* was scathing the morning before lockdown, saying the prime minister was behind the curve and in danger of being likened more to Chamberlain than Churchill. But it was back on board by the time Dominic Cummings had been to Durham and back, declaring that the adviser should stay in post and that Johnson should be allowed to get on with the job.

Others concentrated on the inconvenience to everyday life rather than on the loss of it. Lockdown, when it finally came, was presented as “House arrest” by the *Sun*, which wanted to get back to bonking, boozing and betting, and “End of freedom” by the *Telegraph*, which wanted to get back to business.

Even the really big numbers lost impact. When the ONS and "official" death tolls passed 50,000 and 40,000 respectively, only three newspapers recorded the figures anywhere on their front pages.

Some Tory papers are now reporting more vigorously, their columnists more critical. The *Telegraph* has sought from the word go to minimise the danger of the virus and emphasise the danger of lockdown. Now it is openly attacking the government, if not the prime minister himself. Jeremy Warner, the paper's assistant editor, described the government as a ship of fools, lacking judgment and leadership. Allison Pearson, a huge Johnson fan who wrote in April "The health of Boris is the health of the nation", has been incandescent over social distancing and school closures.

Over at the *Times*, Matthew Parris, never a Johnson fan, tore the prime minister apart, saying he was “only ever a shallow opportunist with a minor talent to amuse”, while Caitlin Moran tweeted “He is the worst prime minister we’ve ever had this century. isn’t he?”

But, for now, the pack are mostly standing by their man, with the *Express* and *Sun* always looking on the bright side. Last week the *Sun* hailed a "triple boost for Covid Britain": pubs were ordering beer, EasyJet was planning flights and there would be "zero deaths soon".

The latter based on “experts” saying there would be no coronavirus deaths at all by July. Well, let’s hope they’re right. In the 10 days after that edition appeared, there were 2,112.

Such loyalty does not, of course, have anything to do with the pandemic. It stems from those twin objectives from last year, before anyone gave a thought to pangolins and Chinese wet markets: keeping the Tories in power and Brexit.

We're out of Europe and time has run out for stopping an absolute break at the end of the year. With an economy that shrank by 20% in April and the OECD predicting that we'll be the nation worst-affected financially by the virus, we need to cut some trade deals fast – at the very moment everyone has more pressing concerns than selling stuff to a small island in the North Sea.

As Francis Beckett wrote in these pages, we are being fattened up for a one-way trade deal with Trump. We are busy watering down our standards on animal welfare, pesticides and country-of-origin labelling. Yet there has been precious little coverage of a U-turn that could bring chlorinated chicken to supermarket shelves in direct contradiction to promises made (and video-recorded) by assorted cabinet ministers.

And when it was reported, look at how! This from the ultra-Brexity *Mail on Sunday*: “The prime minister vowed to stem a feared flood of sub-standard American products by insisting [on]... high import tariffs.” Was this reverse from an outright ban to letting stuff in for a price perhaps a humiliating climbdown? No. It was “a significant victory in the battle to protect British farming”.

The race is on to seal a deal by November 3, in case the Americans kick Trump out, leaving Biden to send us to the back of the queue, as Obama warned us four years ago. That might at least have the knock-on effect of injecting some realism into our last-minute negotiations with the EU.

Excuses are being lined up for the economic and social catastrophe looming next year; obviously it won't be Brexit, but the EU bullies and Covid that are to blame.

But Johnson had better beware. Prime ministers come and go. Newspapers mostly survive from generation to generation, as – even with their shrinking circulations – does their influence. The *Telegraph* may stay loyal to its protégé, the *Express* will go with the flow, but the *Mail*, the Murdoch papers – and eventually his party – will turn against him.

Like the cat that returns to the blue tit nest hours after failing to hold on to its catch, the press will exact revenge for being made to look foolish. It won't be their fault for foisting an indolent, incoherent, incompetent charlatan on the nation; it will be the charlatan's fault for being exactly the flawed man we all knew he was.

Rupert Murdoch is even now almost certainly tossing up between old favourite Govey and new favourite Rishi. He likes winners. Johnson is a loser.



AGENDA

Bonnie Greer



If you want a deep understanding of the mindset of a Victorian colonialist, racist and imperialist, Joseph Conrad's masterpiece *Heart of Darkness* takes you there.

Never again will you wonder how and why the 'Scramble for Africa', the theft and destruction of a continent, happened. This is the report. And it is forensic. But a controversy about the book – again – is raging in America. Michael Eric Dyson, the celebrated African American author of *JAY-Z: Made in America* and many other books, wants Conrad's novella relegated from the masterpiece category. He believes that it has done much damage in fashioning ideas about Africa.

This is nothing new. The great Nigerian novelist, Chinua Achebe, gave a landmark lecture in which he accused Conrad of refusing to give "human expression or language" to the Africans.

He condemned the author for making Africa a mere foil for Europe, assuming it did not exist outside of Europe's relationship with it. That Africa, for Conrad, was the 'other' world. Of course, this analysis is correct. And that is the mark of the work's genius.

We are not told or shown racism and imperialism. Through the eye and the mind of the main character, Marlow, a European sailor, we are taken inside of it. Through him, we see that it is not Africa that is the heart of darkness. It is Europe.

Conrad sums up imperialism and colonialism with the immortal words: "The horror! The horror!"

Published in 1899, at the height of the Victorian Age and its imperial reach, *Heart of Darkness* is the tale of Marlow and his trip up the Congo River, to seek out the mysterious Kurtz.

Conrad gives us the imperial mindset: "They (the traders and colonialists) grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind – as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness. The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea – something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to."

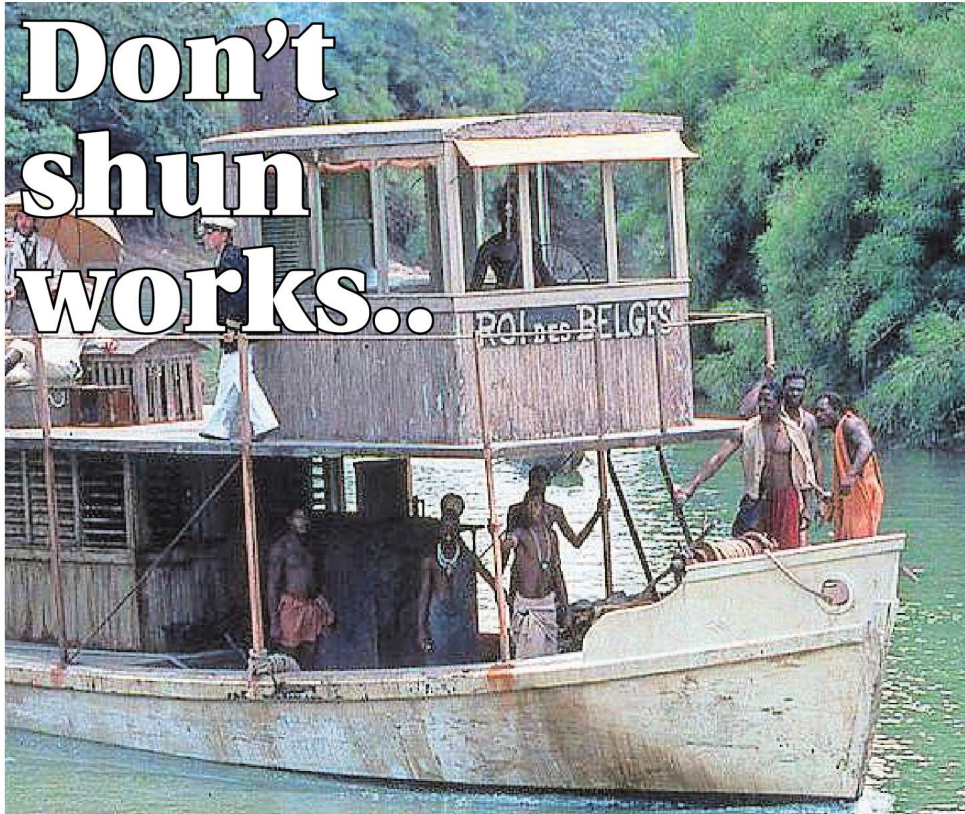
An idea. Being White.

Marlow describes a colleague's violent encounter with an elderly African man: "He had been a couple of years already out there engaged in the noble cause, you know, and he probably felt the need at last of asserting his self-respect in some way."

Colonialism; racism; Christianisation; violence: all part of "the noble cause".

Conrad, through Marlow, also gives us a description of Africans seen through the racist and imperialist gaze.

"They were dying slowly – it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly



now – nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom. Brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts, lost in uncongenial surroundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they sickened, became inefficient, and were then allowed to crawl away and rest."

Became inefficient. Africans were little more than machines.

This and much more is the voyage into

HISTORICAL MASTERCLASSES: A scene from a 1993 adaptation of *Heart of Darkness* and Vivien Leigh and Hattie McDaniel in *Gone with the Wind* (1939)

Photos: IMDB / Getty Images

what seems unfathomable. We see, through the eyes of an embittered man, probably no more racist than the average European of his time, what he felt, what he thought, what he saw, what he did.

Marlow goes to a doctor before he leaves on his voyage to Africa who tells him: "I always ask leave, in the interests of science, to measure the crania of those going out there," he said. 'And when they come back, too?' I asked. 'Oh, I never see

them,' he remarked; 'and, moreover, the changes take place inside, you know.'

This is an example of the bogus science of eugenics, as well as a belief that even going to Africa and encountering African people can change your very anatomy, your head, your brain. And not for the better.

In Africa, Marlow sees a white accountant striding about in the dress of a City banker, even in what must have been sweltering heat. Marlow notes: "I respected his collars, his vast cuffs, his brushed hair. His appearance was certainly that of a hairdresser's dummy; but in the great demoralisation of the land he kept up his appearance. That's backbone."

Backbone. Only white men can have that. And backbone is exhibited in colonisation, in making the great imperial adventure. Why do you think that Winston Churchill, in his youth, went to Africa? Because in being there, among what Kipling called the "fuzzy wuzzies", Churchill could show that he was not only a man, but a 'white man'. All of this and more you can learn from reading *Heart of Darkness*.

Gone with the Wind has been taken off HBO Max because of what the company described as the "ethnic and racial prejudices" it depicted.

But if you want to understand the American South, what lies at its heart even now, and what Black Lives Matter is up against: you can do no better than watch *GWTW*.

The film is a celebration of white superiority filmed in blazing Technicolour. It took me decades to finally sit down and watch this picture. It is not necessary to list its numerous transgressions against African Americans: its distortion of the American Civil War, and the fact that the final part of it is quite simply a recruitment film for the Ku Klux Klan. We know all of that.

What we get, and we get straight, is the glorification of the 'Lost Cause', that post-Civil War romanticisation generated by those who wanted to keep the conflict going. It is this interpretation, this feeling and the angst and anger it excites, that means you have, in the South, statues of Jefferson Davis, the Confederate president, and generals like Robert E. Lee, as well as military bases like Fort Bragg, named after another Southern general, Braxton Bragg. No wonder people now want these statues taken down, these forts re-named. In no other civilisation would military forts be named after men who were traitors. But they are in the United States, *GWTW* shows the reason why.

If we ban the film, we cannot see how a masterpiece can be used to promote tyranny and dehumanisation. How a masterpiece can sanitise treason, a treason based on the demand to keep human beings as chattels. If *Gone with the Wind* is gone, there could come a time when people do not believe that it ever existed. Then we cannot understand how it came to be a Saturday afternoon staple.

And how we, in our innocence and lack of education in history, can become part of the lie that is this great film of the Golden Age of Hollywood. Make a disclaimer 20 minutes long to show at the beginning of the movie, if need be. Include critical material with copies of *Heart of Darkness*.

But do not take these works away. They give us valuable lessons. And a way inside the unpalatable.

Don't fall for false balance between economy and corona

Unless you're an undertaker, death is bad for business. This blunt truth isn't some secret handed down from top economist to top economist, upon their initiation to the profession's inner circle: it's a statement of the obvious.

Our economy – and thus our jobs, our wages, our livelihoods – relies on us having money and being willing to go out and spend it. It is hardly surprising, then, that a deadly pandemic is bad for business.

Dead people don't spend money. Sick people spend far less than usual. Their relatives stay home to look after them. If an illness is spreading fast and people are afraid of it, healthy people stay home too.

None of the above are consequences of lockdown or government policy decisions: they're consequences of an illness like coronavirus itself.

The problem is that these truths, which you'd hope would be self-evident, appear to have escaped a large swathe of Conservative politicians and their accompanying commentariat.

If you believe what you hear and read from that crowd, you'd think that the economic devastation that the UK is only just starting to feel – a huge drop in GDP, a quarter of the working population furloughed, mass unemployment on the way – is all the result of lockdown.

This is true, but only on the shallowest of levels: if we had a perfectly healthy economy without the menace of coronavirus, it would indeed be hugely damaging to inflict lockdown measures upon it. That's why no sane government would ever propose such a thing, and no government did so now.

If we used the analogy of a sickness affecting a person, rather than a society, coronavirus would be something like a cancer, for which chemotherapy was a useful part of the treatment mix. If you allowed yourself to forget the underlying cancer, the chemotherapy would seem like it was the source of all the damage.

A sizeable minority of the elite, mostly though not entirely on the right of politics, appear to have forgotten the underlying facts of coronavirus. It is a highly infectious disease which affects a substantial minority of those who catch it very severely.

Even so-called 'mild' cases can take weeks to recover from, and more serious cases often need hospital beds or even intensive care for weeks if not months. Without the lockdown, the NHS would have been quickly overwhelmed, deaths could have been orders of magnitude higher than they were, and fear alone would soon have kept people home.

That underlying reality has not changed. The UK's track and trace system is patchy at best, our testing is riddled with delayed, there is no reliable treatment for coronavirus anywhere in the world, despite some advances, and we

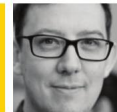


WATCHING BRIEF: A police officer watches from a viewing platform on Oxford Street as non-essential stores reopen for the first time since lockdown

Photo: Getty Images



JAMES BALL'S DECONSTRUCTED



are still months if not years away from having a mass-produced vaccine.

Anyone calling for the government to fully reopen, or for it to "rule out" a second lockdown – as former Conservative leader and foreign secretary William (now Lord) Hague did this week – to "protect the economy" is fundamentally misunderstanding reality.

If we get a severe second wave of coronavirus, it will do even more damage to the economy than the lockdown did. Our first wave was more severe, and the lockdown longer, because we dithered rather than shut down quickly – which would have let us reopen more quickly.

Conservatives such as Hague are imagining a world where politicians and policymakers have an unbelievably hard – even callous – decision to make. They imagine Boris Johnson's hand over a dial where the economy lies at one end, and coronavirus at another, and he has to pick the right number of fatalities to keep Britain's businesses alive.

That's not, thankfully, the world we actually live in. Keeping coronavirus in check and minimising damage to our economy are perfectly aligned as goals – it will cause economic damage to manage coronavirus, but far less than it would to ignore it and reopen without a plan.

We should not be comparing our performance to a world in which coronavirus didn't mutate or one in which it was successfully contained.

That's not the world we live in. Our options now are whether the damage is 'bad', 'awful' or 'catastrophic'.

This is not a good time for unfounded optimism. During a pandemic, optimism gets you killed, and puts those around you at risk. During a recession, optimism leaves you broke – and possibly your business too. Now is a time for realists.

Phase one of coronavirus was botched, from beginning to end. It will be years until official inquiries decide why or who was to blame, but the UK reacted slowly and indecisively, leaving us with one of the highest death tolls in the world, a commensurately long lockdown, and with larger economic damage to come.

Two errors do not a right answer make, though. Losing a tyre on lap one of a race does not mean we should accelerate all the faster on lap two to make up for lost time. We need to accept a pit stop. It is precisely because the lockdown was long and painful that we need to reopen slowly and carefully, and actually get the systems in place that we should have had long ago. That, rather than a chaotic and rushed reopening, is what will keep the death toll down in future, and what will minimise the economic damage.

In a perverse way, Johnson is in a lucky position: the choices that will keep the most people alive are the ones that will protect the economy, too. He should not listen to the demons at his shoulder who claim otherwise.

Euronews:

POLICE SEND EXTRA OFFICERS TO QUELL VIOLENCE IN DIJON

The French government has sent police reinforcements and a senior official to the Dijon region to quell four nights of violent clashes between rival groups that have left at least 10 injured and cars burned.

The reasons for the unrest are under investigation, but local officials say it appears linked to the drug trade and tensions between members of France's Chechen community and other groups.

Similar clashes have erupted in Nice in recent days, which the mayor attributed to tensions over drug territory between local Chechen residents and their rivals. Four people were reported injured there.

The unrest in Dijon's Gresilles neighbourhood began last week after a teenager from the Chechen community was attacked by local drug dealers, according to broadcaster France Bleu. Members of the Chechen community called on social networks for revenge, and the fighting began on Friday.

TWO NEO-NAZIS GO ON TRIAL ACCUSED OF KILLING POLITICIAN

A German court has started hearing the case against two far-right extremists accused of killing a regional politician whose execution-style murder shocked the country last year. Walter Luebcke, a member of Angela Merkel's party who led the regional administration in the Kassel area of central Germany, was shot on his porch on June 1, 2019, and died later that night.

Stephan Ernst, a 46-year-old with previous convictions for violent anti-migrant crimes, is accused of murder, attempted murder, serious bodily harm and firearms offences.

A second man, identified only as Markus H because of privacy rules, is charged with being an accessory to murder and breaking firearms laws.

NORTH MACEDONIAN ELECTION PROMPTS STATE OF EMERGENCY

North Macedonia's president declared a state of emergency ahead of an early national election after the country's main political leaders agreed the vote will be held on July 15. Stevo Pendarovski issued the decree on Monday and it came into force immediately. His office said the decision will allow authorities to make the necessary preparations to ensure public health is protected during the campaign and voting amid the coronavirus pandemic. The early election had initially been planned for April but was delayed after the virus appeared in North Macedonia in late February.

NORWAY SUSPENDS TRACING APP OVER PRIVACY CONCERNS

Norway has suspended use of its smartphone app meant to track and trace coronavirus after a public spat between health authorities and the information watchdog. Geir Bukholm, an official at the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH), said the decision to delete data and halt any further information gathering from the app "weakened the country's preparedness" should the infection rate increase. The app was being tested in three municipalities. But the Norwegian Data Protection Agency said, amongst other things, that the low infection rate meant data gathering on the app could no longer be justified against privacy concerns.

AGENDA

Losing the dressing room



MICHAEL WHITE ON HOW PM'S INEPT LEADERSHIP HAS HIS OWN TEAM LOOKING FOR CHANGE

Is it really four years this coming week since Boris Johnson's self-serving toss of the Brexit coin swung the June 23, 2016, referendum narrowly in favour of 'Leave EU. It is, it is. What a wretched and frustrating time it has been for millions of people on both sides of that still-yawning fault line. Exhausting and demoralising, yet with no end in sight.

These past few days have set me wondering about a different question: how long will Johnson last as Britain's Brexit prime minister? Unease about his inadequate performance is evident among Conservative MPs and the restless press. One Tory admirer who still believes that "Boris has a fifth gear the others don't have" tells me he has not recovered – "mentally or physically" – from his near-fatal Covid-19 attack.

Mail columnists openly ask if "the deflated, indecisive Boris [is] merely a temporary phenomenon," laid low by Covid-19, or the "true Boris" most *TNE* readers have always known? Downing St insiders privately tell their friends that the machine isn't working and that Team Boris just isn't up to the job.

That is how it so often looks and sounds in public as blandly Brexit-compliant ministers take their cue on free holiday meal vouchers from Manchester United striker, Marcus Rashford. He's a man who can spot an open goal with the keeper in disarray. "GOAL! Rashford has scored!" Shut down the international development department and put Therese Coffey on the transfer list to pay for it.

One grizzled Labour *éminence grise* who's seen it all, goes as far as to predict that the Tories will road-test two more leaders before they face Keir Starmer on election day in 2024. Next year we will get another Brexit hardliner for slow learners, followed by a wily pragmatist. Step forward Michael Gove? A lot can change in four years but, if "Trust Me" Govey is the answer to a government's lost authority, you can see how desperate things may be. Oxford science's discovery of Dexamethasone's benign side effect is encouraging, but it doesn't change the politics.

Of course, the world we now inhabit is already utterly changed by the pandemic. Even the intricacies of the Irish border dispute and the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) have paled in comparison with the science of two-metre distancing in the supermarket and the efficacy of wearing masks in the street, as well as on the bus. Black and white Britons protested against racial injustice together this week, but rather more of them celebrated multiculturalism by hitting those reopened shops with glee.

So much does the fallout from Covid-19 dominate the news cycle that the negotiating deadlock over Brexit Britain's new relationship with the EU27 have

rarely made the inside pages, let alone the pre-masticated TV news bulletins. Even Monday's No.10 Zoom conference to "put a tiger in the talk tank" (as Boris's Book of Nostalgic Clichés put it) failed to compete with Covid or the Black Lives Matter controversies. Only the *FT* deemed the optimistic "bit of oomph" spin worthy of page one.

Most *realpolitik* advocates I read, listen or talk to believe that both sides have too much to lose at this dangerous, nationalistic juncture in world affairs – in a week when Donald Trump pulled 9,000 more US troops out of Germany – to risk a no-deal outcome on December 31. From inside his bubble Johnson talks of being not "actually that far apart", which either means he's out of touch or preparing to retreat under a barrage of "Take Back Control" clichés.



Brussels, Paris and – most important – Berlin still prefer an over-arching agreement that embraces close regulatory alignment overseen by the ECJ to what Council president, Charles Michel of Belgium, calls Boris's "pig in a poke". We'll come back to that. But failure to achieve even a vestigial deal that leaves much more to be sifted-and-sorted in mind-numbing years ahead has the potential to damage both Britain and the EU27. It is tacitly admitted.

"But Britain would suffer so much more," cry a chorus of retired diplomats of a certain persuasion. "The poorer UK regions would suffer most, as usual," warn economists. "Ethnic minority citizens at the bottom of the pile would suffer the hardest," add BLM activists.

They're probably all correct. But before we get too carried away by a masochistic surge, it's worth putting the last four years into the context of broader failure. Complacent and over-confident, David Cameron badly mishandled his own party and his EU 'renegotiation' ahead of 2016's June 23 ballot. But so did Brussels and Berlin, which had not grasped the scale of resurgent promises to 'Make America/Russia/the Philippines/Brazil/ Great Again'. Either that or they chose to imagine that modern Europe is safely vaccinated against that particular virus, as we might put it nowadays.

The EU's big players had already been slow to respond to the 2009 financial crisis and the suffering imposed on weaker members of the Eurozone, notably Greece. Even the European Central Bank (ECB), hero of the hour under Mario ("whatever it takes") Draghi, was slow to pump helicopter cash into liquidity-stricken economies, as US and UK central bankers had done.

Moves towards some form of banking union and serious levels of EU-backed debt have been late and timid, despite the

urgency of the challenge. Germany's constitutional court is flashing its red light against further ECB mission creep. It is an arguably illegal judicial precedent that nationalistic Poland and Hungary will pocket, AfD nationalists in Germany too.

As post-Brexit budget negotiations intensify over who will fill the hole left by Boris's bus, the 'Frugal Four' do not sound very *communautaire* either in 2020. At the same time the EU's Long Trousers Tendency have not done enough to rescue the EU's southern frontline states from pressures of global migration – driven by poverty, corruption and war. Most obviously not in Syria and Libya, both symbols of wider western retreat. Ailing Greece thus suffered a double whammy and initially elected left populists. Italians responded to the crisis by choosing right populists.

Angela Merkel, Germany and the EU's rock, had already suffered her own wobble, the 2015 admission of up to million Syrian refugees, a policy lurch which would fail most of Alastair Campbell's 10 point tests of good governance. As in Athens a "good Covid crisis" has restored her government's standing. But these scars are real and their consequences still unclear.

Health policy remains rooted in national governments, but institutions of the EU have not had a good crisis and struggle to find a role resisting centrifugal impulses so evident in PPE bidding wars where China – another instance of incoherent response to a strategic threat – joins info-wars Russia to promote divisive instincts. The European parliament has this week been promoting a campaign, interrupted by the Covid crisis, to strengthen popular ties at grassroots level with the EU institutions. Admirable, but

It is a brainchild of Emmanuel Macron and does not seem to have many friends among tired and fragile national governments. They are still reeling from pandemic and the debt legacy on slow-growth-to-no-growth economies. Coming from anyone less high-minded, say a lobbyist faking up local support for a controversial block of flats, we might call Macron's plan astroturfing. There are opportunities here to learn lessons from the lockdown and reshape post-Covid societies to work better. Do we hear a trumpet call to take them? Is the spadework being done?

At least the French president has a good pandemic story to tell voters this week. The crisis is over, the virus beaten, life is returning to normal in the France they love. Complacent? Possibly, but the message is at least clear, the decisions have been taken, schools, work places and beloved cafes are opening in some semblance of order. *Doigts* crossed.

We cannot say the same of the less than

United Kingdom, can we? Not when doctors, chief nurses and scientists mysteriously disappear from their No.10 podium when they refuse to 'follow the politics' on Dominic Cummings. Judging by the excess mortality rates, the devolved administrations in Wales and Scotland have handled the crisis scarcely better than England, but have better handled the sensibilities of their voters and emerged stronger for it.

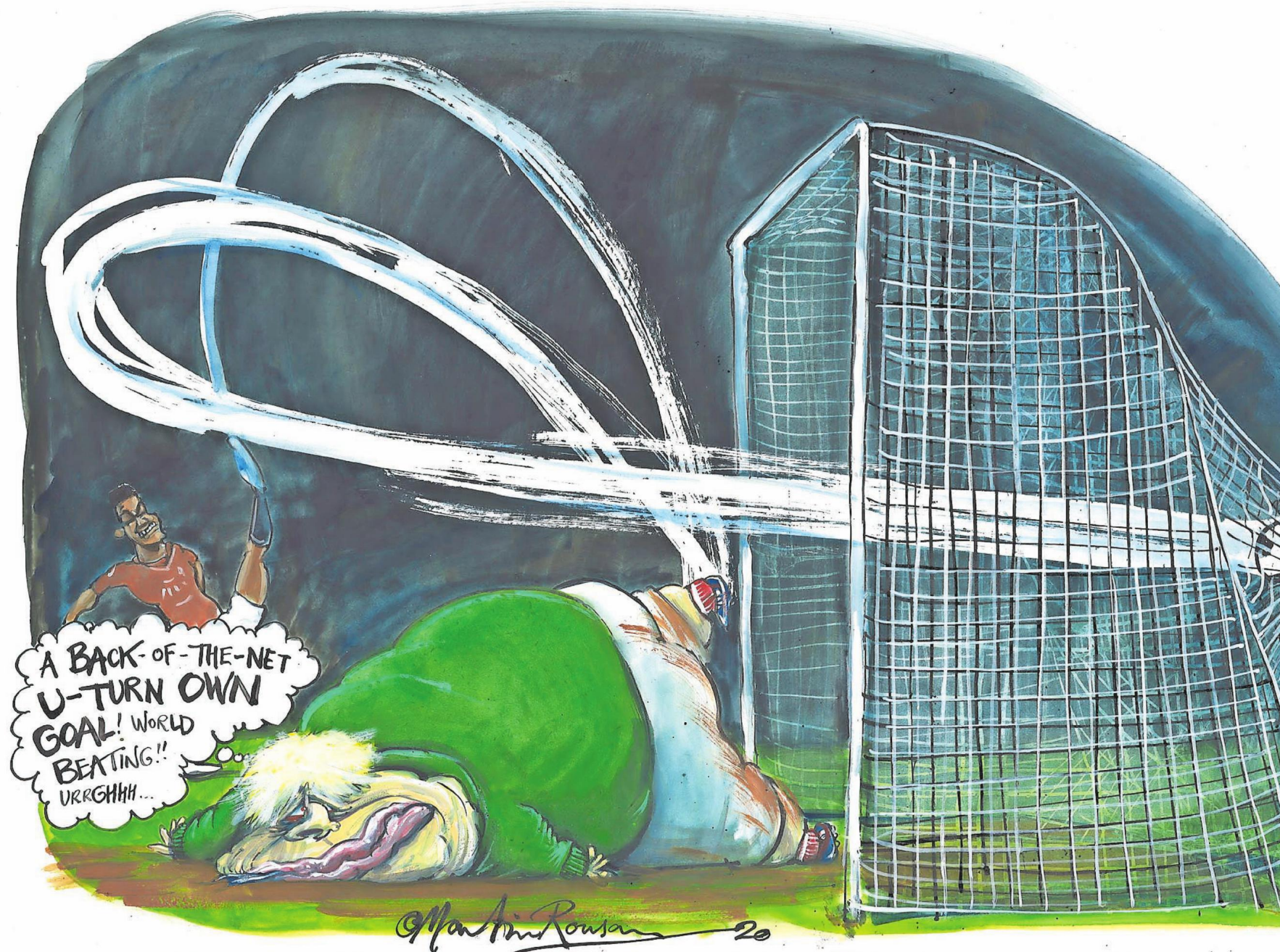
To have been placed third in the global deaths table after the rogue populist regimes in the US and Brazil – if the eventually reliable data confirms it – is a blow to what remains of Britain's reputation for pragmatic and competent administration. The lapse is noted far beyond the EU27, whose tourism ministers seem strangely resistant to 'air corridors' for cabin-fever British holidaymakers this summer while the UK's R rate of infection remains stubbornly high. This despite the exhortations of the Tory tabloids, perhaps because of them and their conceits about British exceptionalism, where every pledge must be "world-beating".



But the debit column in UK Plc's account since 2016 is far more extensive than a late lockdown or the failure of 'world-beating' track and trace apps on the Isle of Wight. We have just passed the third anniversary of the Grenfell fire, itself a source of collective shame, especially for wealthy Kensington and Chelsea council. It is one made worse by the continuing failure to get that inflammable cladding off 2,000 buildings despite promises made – on "the back of a fag packet" as Labour's David Lammy said of Johnson's new commission on persistent racial inequality.

Even Ruby McGregor-Smith, Tory author of the government's 2017 report, struggled to defend its inaction on BAME issues. Covid, Grenfell, the Windrush affair, not to mention the shocking persecution of 550 or more sub-postmasters for 'thefts' committed by the Post Office's own faulty software – all are derelictions of the state's fundamental duty of care to its citizens. They tear at the fabric of society, much as Margaret Thatcher's traumatic battle with the miners did, and Tony Blair's ill-executed war in Iraq.

All states have failures. The Germans mishandled their migrant crisis, their new Berlin airport and their opera house in Hamburg. The French have suffered many months of *gilets jaunes* riots far worse than BLM protests and far-right pushback. The Dutch are dropping *Zwarte Piet* as a Christmas symbol and Belgium can no longer ignore King Leopold II's savage personal looting of



the Congo. His Brussels statue will not long survive. To their shame, Americans elected Donald Trump. No statues for him as the US pandemic persists. Sweden's technocratic refusal to lockdown, so admired by US populists, is looking flakier.

But Britain's post-referendum years have been particularly miserable. Redeemed by countless acts of good neighbourliness, by this year's heroism by NHS and care staff, by BLM demonstrator Patrick Hutchinson's dramatic rescue of a white counter-protestor from angry attackers, by quiet public and private decency, it has been a dreadful time for good governance at the centre in Whitehall.

Cameron fled the field. May dithered, then produced negotiating 'red lines' which turned out to be written in chalk, evidently lacking the stamina or guile for the highest office. At least she was honest in her way, Boris. Team Johnson's poll lead over post-Corbyn Labour has shrunk from 23% to 3-4%, its Covid approval rating down to 30%. The other day I surprised myself by saying aloud: "You can't imagine Thatcher or Blair leading us into this mess."

How does this low level of confidence (now shared by most Leave voters, polls suggest) bode for the trade talk endgame?

The PM breezily declared after this week's Zoom with Ursula von der Leyen that they can be wrapped by July, not in 11th hour pre-Christmas talks as many assume. Not well.

Some weeks ago, Martin Wolf, wise Yoda of the *FT*, wrote a savage column in which he listed seven reasons why a no-deal Brexit would be disastrous. *TNE* readers can imagine most of them and don't have to agree with all of them. In 2016, Leave explicitly promised that a free trade deal would be easy because Britain "held all the cards" and would not need to infringe free trade with tariffs.

Ministers have steadily retreated from that. Michael Gove's barely-noticed announcement last Friday that the UK would not seek a negotiating extension was accompanied by a six-month period in 2021 when tariffs and customs paperwork will be introduced step-by-step to ease business burdens. The Council's M. Michel declined to reciprocate.

As with the Irish border issue he expects Whitehall to fudge and concede. But he knows that Johnson's adhesion to last autumn's political declaration on future relations included fair and open trade with a 'level playing field' on standards, properly enforced by legal arbitration.

Team Johnson is also rowing back from that on grounds of 'sovereignty'. Yet it is gradually dawning on ministers that even sovereign states have to make concessions if they want trade deals with tiny-but-nice New Zealand, as well as the large-and-less-nice US. Washington's small print demands may hurt UK agriculture, pharmaceutical and health industries, tech and much else. Boris is ever the man to trade a detail for a cheerily misleading headline. His officials will be under threat to go along with it.



In any case, our post-Covid world is already one of lower growth, less free trade, shorter supply lines, less cooperation between governments. Powerful impulses towards protecting home industries are busily infecting the Tory backbenches too. It's not what Boris' blasé free trade rhetoric envisaged. His journalist's habit of writing his way out of a corner via a *Telegraph* column does not work in government. Just look how badly his 'no victimhood' piece for Monday's paper bombed.

It's not just the *Mail* and the *Borisgraph*. In last week's *New Statesman* (yes, really), Tim Montgomerie, Tory true

believer, former IDS advisor and founder of the *ConHome* website, recalled how it took Thatcher six years before she stopped listening to alternative advice. Flip-flop Boris sacked his competent critics after six months and another purge looms as the Vote Leave campaign goes on campaigning instead of governing. Without his shrewd ex-wife, Marina, to dispense candour, Johnson is lost, Covid illness or no. Cummings is now a liability.

Montgomerie is decent but naïve. But put an ailing Johnson together with an increasingly assertive backbench mood and he may not have the stomach for the fight much longer. His health gives him an alibi to quit, as it gives colleagues an excuse to produce the famous pearl-handled revolver and a bottle of Scotch. They've noted the dark bags under his eyes.

It's still possible to cut all sorts of pragmatic deals with the EU27 before December 31. Perhaps it suits Tory party managers to leave the boss in place so he can take the blame for inevitable disappointments that compromise over fish or the ECJ will inflame among the Faragistas – or the lack of compromise will trigger elsewhere. But the Boris Magic is gone. If you'd never noticed it, sorry, but it's too late now.

LETTERS: Have your say, email letters@theneweuropean.co.uk

Come together to end the cycle of Tory extremism

Andrew Adonis is quite right that we need an electoral pact in 2024 to rid ourselves of these directionless extremists ("The crucial contest", *TNE* #198), but I would suggest he doesn't go far enough.

What is needed is a grand democratic coalition between all the opposition parties to only field the single strongest candidate in each constituency with the sole aim of winning a majority that would enact the best pre-agreed form of proportional representation available.

This would be followed immediately after by a second general election with voting under the new PR system, at which all parties could pursue their individual policies secure in the knowledge that they would get fair representation in the new (and hopefully semi-circular) chamber.

The electoral landscape would have been changed forever and we could finally say goodbye to first-past-the-post and hello to European-style consensus politics.

If Tony Blair had carried through his 1997 manifesto commitment on PR we would not be in this dire state today.

Robert Smith
Totnes

Andrew Adonis' enlightening article hit on a very important note. I'm a Liberal Democrat member of four years who, as a pragmatist, desperately wants Keir Starmer to be the next prime minister. The vast majority of Lib Dems I know massively prefer Starmer to Johnson.

It will be incumbent on the next Lib Dem leader, therefore, to start working with Labour forthwith. Good relations should be fostered between the two parties of the centre-left, thus opening the gates for Labour to stand down in the three dozen or more seats the Lib Dems compete with the Tories for.

The Lib Dems should also, of course, stand down in Labour/Conservative marginal seats. This will be a crucial step in the mission to wrench power away from the Tory regime this country has suffered for far too long.

Sebastian Monblat
Sutton

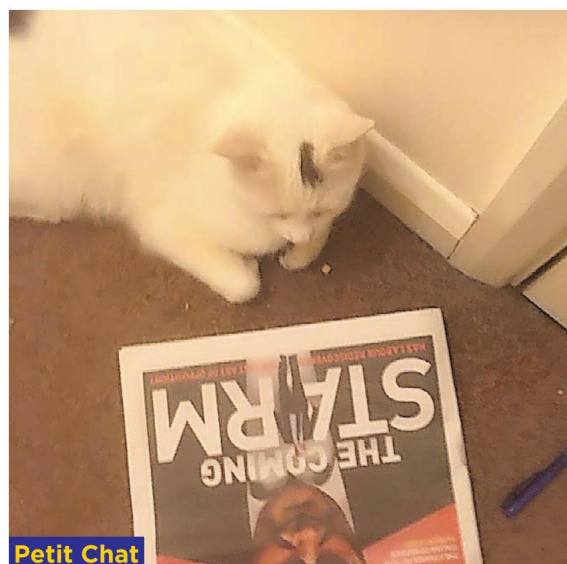
Rightmare

There are some points Zoe Williams overlooked in "Why did it all go right?", (*TNE* #198). From a Labour perspective, things went wrong when Ed Miliband defeated his brother David – decisive, pragmatic, everything Ed wasn't – to succeed Gordon Brown. Then Labour lurched to the far left and the unelectable Jeremy Corbyn.

After years of success, the Lib Dems blew it in 2010 by going into coalition with the Tories, who hoodwinked them.

Then we come to 2019, when the Lib

Animal readers of THE NEW EUROPEAN



Reader Graham Smith writes: "Allow me to introduce next door's cat, Petit Chat. I first saw her in 2016 when she was only a kitten. On June 23 she sat on her balcony looking stately, and watched me as I went to the polling station to vote Remain. Ever since then we have been firm friends."

■ Does the animal who runs your household read *TNE*? Send photographic evidence and crucial biographical details to letters@theneweuropean.co.uk, putting 'Animal Readers' in the subject field

it down first, I am nearly certain it would have remained a bitter argument in perpetuity.

Dave Marley
Philadelphia

Tim Bradford's "Famous Racists" cartoon (*TNE* #198) makes the valid point beneath the cartoon of the toppled Colston statue that schools should teach the truth about Empire.

In the 1970s, the BBC TV screened a documentary series titled *The British Empire*, made with Time Life to provide a more balanced view of Britain's colonial past. It was widely criticised by viewers who had been taught history that glorified British rule.

The BBC should screen or stream *The British Empire* again to measure from the response the extent to which attitudes have changed since it was broadcast decades years ago.

Roger Hinds
Surrey

When the prime minister says he wants to "change the narrative" and to "stop the sense of victimisation and discrimination", we should take him seriously - and literally.

Seriously, because the phrasing is judicious enough to look empathetic, but re-orientates the issue sufficiently to appeal to the affronted Right; literally, because it is the 'sense' of discrimination that Johnson wishes to address, not its reality.

His pronouncement therefore has everything to do with moral signposting and nothing to do with substance.

As many have already cautioned, there is nothing some would like better than to characterise Black Lives Matter protestors as self-interested, destructive promoters of victimhood. Whether or not Johnson himself believes this is less important than his disingenuous positioning of BAME "success" as the "story" we have lost sight of.

No-one should be surprised by BAME achievements, other than that they have been secured despite obvious barriers, barriers which we do not need a new commission to rediscover. But congratulations, promises of celebratory memorials, and new proposals that can be safely ignored, provide much better mood music than the dissonance of racism that soundtracks so many lives.

And that is very much the point: to the determinedly unconvinced, systemic racism and BAME success are a contradiction. For them, the problem is perception rather than prejudice. For them, the preposterous idea that protestors want to "photoshop the entire landscape" illustrates the whingeing wrong-headedness of ingrates with prodigious chips on their shoulders.

The prime minister knows very well that words matter and knows too the

Dem comeback was stalled by Jo Swinson, inexperienced and naive, who managed even to upset Remainers by wishing to revoke Article 50.

Is hoping that Keir Starmer and Ed Davey can work loosely together with an unwritten agreement on how to improve our society just wishful thinking?

Mick Nice
Leicester

I take Zoe Williams' point that the Conservatives hoodwinked us into believing they would dismantle the burning injustices in this country. Well, we know how well that went.

Williams is correct too that the coalition felt like a kinder, gentler government but despite the Lib Dems putting the breaks on many draconian policies, austerity was the only game in town and seemingly a political choice.

Though the current chancellor is now spending billions on support for businesses and their employees, watch this space to make sure austerity does not raise its head again.

Judith A Daniels
Great Yarmouth

Plinth fillip

I suspect Mitch Benn did not choose the photograph which accompanied his analysis of the Bristol incident ("History not erased by sunken statue", *TNE* #198), or he would surely have drawn attention to the crowded footbridge seen in the background of the picture.

This is Pero's Bridge – a Millennium-

era project which spans an arm of the Floating Harbour (not the River Avon as captioned) and which the city council named for a Caribbean slave who was brought to Bristol as a domestic servant in the 18th century.

According to the National Archives, it is one of the few public monuments to the black or Asian presence in the whole of Britain, and it is reflective of a city which is always prepared to address and debate the ongoing grievances about its mercantile history – something that Mitch might have touched on.

Nigel Britton

What was missing from the Colston statue discussion on your podcast ("Statues, EU face-off and bubbles bursting", 12/6/20) was that the activists had other options available.

What if, instead of tearing it down, they had maintained a socially distanced vigil at the statue for a couple of days while also organizing a pressure campaign of Bristol citizens? In this particular environment, I find it hard to believe that the city wouldn't have found a way to remove the statue, quickly.

Here in Philadelphia, a statue of an explicitly racist former police chief stood outside our main municipal building for decades, as the debate over removing it ebbed and flowed, seemingly with no resolution in sight.

It was removed overnight by the city on the fifth day of the protest... and basically everybody in the city is happy about it except a handful of racists and a somewhat larger group of the truly oblivious among us. Had protestors torn

Who's the most Prime Ministerial? Boris Johnson or Marcus Rashford?

TIM BRADFORD

What's going on?

ONE IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE PLIGHT OF THE UNDERPRIVILEGED



ONE'S A TEAM PLAYER WHO WORKS HARD FOR OTHERS AND IS HONEST



ONE IS CREATIVE, A DEEP THINKER WHO CONNECTS WITH PEOPLE



AT LEAST THE RIGHT PERSON IS NOW RUNNING THE COUNTRY



plausible deniability of the messages he encourages between his lines.

Paul McGilchrist

Priti bad

Your website reports that Priti Patel could be reshuffled for failing to enthusiastically support Dominic Cummings.

There are so many things for which Priti Patel should be sacked. Could it really be possible that she is actually sacked for the one thing in her life for which she does not deserve to be sacked?

John Davies
Colchester

Bum steer

Monday June 14, 6am: Marcus Rashford posts his "open letter" to MPs asking for the government to reverse its decision not to extend the free school meal voucher system to the summer holidays.

The story features in numerous news broadcasts through the day. By the time BBC2's Newsnight goes on air, there are already rumours of a Tory backbench rebellion.

Tuesday, 7am: Transport Secretary Grant Shapps confirms on various TV news outlets that the decision will not be reversed.

Later that morning the government announces a U-turn on the issue and may just possibly have brought forward its announcement on the merging (sorry - submerging) of the International Development Department into the Foreign Office to cover its embarrassment. Cue Tom Tugendhat's overweening oleaginous intervention of support of the Prime Minister in the Commons.

5pm: At the daily Downing Street briefing, Boris Johnson states that he had been unaware of the Rashford campaign until that very day.

Possible explanations. 1) There is no radio or television in the Downing Street bunker.

2) Dominic Cummings and his team decided that a campaign drawing huge

media interest, launched by a high-profile England international playing for one of football's most famous clubs, was not worth the PM's attention.

3) This a blatant example of Boris Johnson's extraordinarily casual relationship with the truth.

Conclusion. As the first two are implausible to varying degrees, the last explanation must be the only credible one. This assessment is not only dictated by his past offences but also by his obvious need to provide a reason for his apparent total lack of empathy for those less fortunate members of society.

Anthony West

That our prime minister is incompetent, irresponsible and immature is shown in sharp relief by Nick Holland's article ("PM's car crash of a book", *TNE* #197).

It is shocking that Boris Johnson's collection of motoring columns was not written by a 17-year-old who had spent too much time on *Grand Theft Auto*, but a 35-year-old man with an overblown sense of entitlement who clearly believed the law of the road is just for the little people.

Many Conservative MPs have written books, some of which have been of considerable literary merit. Mr Johnson is not a towering author; other than in his imagination, but an intellectual lightweight.

And now we hear that Mr Johnson allowed zoos to open after his father had suggested it was a good idea!

James Irvine
Skipton

Trip advisor

The relative absence of coverage of the government's quarantine arrangements in *TNE* has been somewhat disappointing.

Many of your readers are likely to have partners, friends, family members, academic colleagues and/or business associates across Europe that they cannot visit in person at the moment due to the impact of those arrangements, and as things stand there is no certainty as to when they will end.

As such, it's a much wider, deeper and more emotive issue than whether or not we can simply 'go on holiday'.

While it would have been logical to impose such arrangements when lockdown began, the decision to do so now appears to be a political one designed to shore up support for a beleaguered government. It certainly makes things more difficult for those of us whose lives do not fit neatly within the borders of the UK.

Norman Jope
Plymouth and (hopefully one day)
Budapest

Altared state

Re: "Locked churches" by Will Self (*TNE* #198), I consider it an abject dereliction of duty to close places of worship during the lockdown. Can there be any easier places to monitor social distancing than their high, wide empty spaces?

It demonstrates how secular and lacking in real religious fervour our spiritual leaders have become that they allowed it to happen without protest. They should be ashamed of themselves.

Mind you being ashamed doesn't appear to be a very fashionable attitude these days. Conservative politicians of old would have been so ashamed at presiding over such a high Covid death toll they would have resigned by now.

Peter Bourne
Wandsworth Common

Word up

I am afraid that Edmund Nankivell's criticism of St Thomas' Hospital (*Letters*, *TNE* #198) is misplaced.

Although I would probably say St Thomas's Hospital, it is also correct to write St Thomas' and to pronounce it as the singular noun Thomas.

Angus Wilkinson
Selby

A question for Peter Trudgill. On a visit to Ireland a while ago, I observed from a notice on public toilets that the Irish for

"men" and "women" is *fir* and *mna*.

Irish is a Indo-European language; but the equivalent words in Hungarian (a Finno-Ugrian language) are *ferfi* and *no*. Is there some link between these two language families?

Jeremy Pritlove

How strange Michael Berridge from Berlin (*Letters*, *TNE* #198) writes about German words, then uses *portmanteau* to describe them. Surely the correct word would be *schlangewort*?

Chris Simmons
Bristol and Mittenwald

Dredd winner

Is there any chance your excellent publication could do a feature on European graphic comic art and some of its legendary creators, such as Moebius or Philippe Druillet?

A very talented Spaniard created our very own fascist lawman of the future, Judge Dredd, his name Carlos Ezquerro.

S Kneath
Swansea

I look forward to reading *Great European Lives* each week. Issue #197's focus on Joseph Bologne was particularly relevant and enlightening. Have you considered publishing the series in book form? I would be one of the first to buy a copy.

David Pope
Royal Wootton Bassett

Mail fail

I didn't think we could reach new heights of hypocrisy - but then I read the headline in the *Mail on Sunday*: "What has become of the tolerant Britain we love?"

No further comment required.

Phil Green

AGENDA

► From page 13

Double talk

Boris Johnson's recent speech urged EU workers to return to the UK post-lockdown, seemingly in an attempt to appease the critique that much of the reliable and talented workforce, particularly from the hospitality sector, had left the UK.

Just two weeks ago we saw the real reason for Brexit: a bill designed to end free movement, undoubtedly, one which will concurrently spell the end of UK citizens' argument to freedom of movement in return. After so long reaping the benefits of this system within the European Union, the government has now managed to convince itself that 'to open the UK to the world, we must close it'. To go from not wanting EU citizens to work here freely, to wanting them to work here freely in the space of two weeks is beyond ridiculous. When this Conservative government has spent the best part of four years selling a pipe dream of an ex-bloc utopia, to witness the irony of the PM suggesting that EU workers are still 'welcome' is nauseating.

From a personal perspective, as a British-born descendent of an Italian immigrant family which relocated to the UK in the height of the worker shortage after the Second World War, I can confirm two subtle differences between now and then for the prime minister: The UK no longer has the same economic attraction to match the quantity of immigration red tape required to satisfy the government's superiority complex; there are now 26 more appealing countries to choose from. It's almost as if the EU had created a perfectly good system all along.

Rocchi Acierno
London

Thorny issue

How cynical it is to use lovely spaces such as the rose gardens at the White House and those at Downing Street as a prop to express divisive ignorant views or to treat us like fools. It would have been better for all if Mr Trump and Mr Cummings had taken time out to smell the roses instead. I suggest they reconnect with the natural world in *all* its forms.

Brian Langley

Breaking borders

Europe facing a surge in meth use

IAN HAMILTON and HARRY SUMNALL on why experts suspect the drug is about to take hold across the continent



For many people in Europe, the closest they will have got to methamphetamine will be the TV series *Breaking Bad*. But that could be about to change, as a result of developments in the international supply chain for cocaine and a new potential alliance between Mexican drug cartels and illegal European laboratories.

Other members of the amphetamine family have been used in Europe for years. A number are used in medicine, such as methylphenidate in the treatment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); while 'speed' or d-amphetamine has had a steady following among recreational drug users. Methamphetamine is more potent than speed, produces more intense effects, has a longer duration of action, and is more likely to be inhaled or injected. Also known as meth, crystal or ice, regular use is more likely to damage users' brains or affect their mental health. Illicit production of methamphetamine also has a high environmental cost from things like chemical waste.

So far, meth use in Europe has been quite limited. In England and Wales, for instance, only 15,000 people reported using the drug in 2018-19. This includes some notable pockets of use, but other drugs are more available, more embedded in leisure and lifestyle, and don't have the same negative media representation. In contrast, 976,000 people reported using cocaine, and around half a million used ecstasy.

This is very different to the US and also Asia. In east and south-east Asia, for instance, the meth trade is now estimated to be worth around \$61 billion (£48 billion) a year, having quadrupled in five years to become the world's biggest market.

The supply has increased on the back of intense manufacturing in the region, which has improved quality and driven down prices.

The gamechanger for Europe could be coming via the cocaine market. Some reports suggest that the price of coca, the raw ingredient of cocaine, is falling. You might think this would lead to heightened demand, but it could actually threaten future supplies as South American coca farmers switch to alternative crops to put food on the table. This gap in the market could play into the hands of manufacturers of methamphetamine looking to expand into Europe.

Historically, meth production in Europe has been quite localised, serving small domestic markets or exporting to more profitable regions like Asia-Pacific and the Middle East. Now, however, there is intelligence that organised crime groups from Mexico might be beginning to take an interest in Europe, potentially sharing manufacturing expertise and supply chains for raw materials.

A number of reports from the Netherlands also suggest that well-established laboratories which had been manufacturing large quantities of MDMA (ecstasy) are now switching to meth production. One mobile meth laboratory was even found in a boat moored at Rotterdam docks. According to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), reports of police seizures of methamphetamine have also recently increased in Europe.

Due to the coronavirus, we know that a European recession is unfolding. It threatens record levels of unemployment, with knock-on effects on consumer spending and people's choice of leisure activities. Particularly at a time like this, value for money in the drugs market is just as important as with the legitimate economy. This is where methamphetamine may have an advantage over cocaine: its effects last significantly longer, and falling prices and high purity from more European production may make it seriously competitive.

There are several historical examples of how consumers replace one drug with another. When consumers substitute because of

government attempts to clamp down on a specific drug, criminologists sometimes call it the 'balloon' or 'hydra' effect. One of the reasons for the recent explosion in meth use in Asia, for example, was authorities attempting to suppress heroin use and poppy cultivation in the region. This merely increased manufacturing of synthetic drugs like methamphetamine. Not only that, heroin use continued as supply re-routed from Afghanistan to Myanmar.

Shortages of drugs or the arrival of new synthetic drugs have both prompted consumers to substitute one variety for another. And if there is a big rise in methamphetamine use in Europe, drug services in many countries won't be prepared.

Foreseeing what will happen in the drug market is certainly not an exact science. Specialists have predicted a rise in meth use in the UK before and been proven wrong. But this time, along with changes in the global supply chain, we have a pandemic that provides fertile conditions for a stimulant like meth because many people are doing less than usual.

Finally, a thought on how to prepare for this possible surge. In their response to coronavirus, most governments have shown they are willing to "follow the science" to protect the public's health. As citizens and voters, we can ask them to extend this logic to drugs policy.

The past few decades' drug policies of control and criminalisation have been costly and have seemingly failed to achieve their intended objectives. Taking control of production and supply of drugs might seem far-fetched, but there are great potential rewards for thinking outside of the box in this area – both in relation to methamphetamine and other recreational drugs. The pandemic has shown that when there is the incentive and willingness to act, no policies are off the table.

■ Ian Hamilton is an associate professor in addiction and mental health at the University of York; Harry Sumnall is a professor in substance use at Liverpool John Moores University; this article also appears at theconversation.com

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SUNA ERDEM on the continuing failure of the government to get a grip on the issue of education in the pandemic



“Absolutely astonishing!” “Smacks of poor organisation.” Damning words from Ofsted’s former chief Michael Wilshaw on the government’s failure to orchestrate an orderly return to education in the shadow of Covid-19.

Labour leader Keir Starmer has been no more forgiving. It was time Boris Johnson took responsibility for his failings on this, he railed at prime ministers’ questions last week: “This mess was avoidable. The consequences are stark.”

In the days after it emerged that only a fraction of primary school children slated to return to the classroom had done so, and efforts to get other years in by the summer looking remote, the education secretary, Gavin Williamson, has been accused of “sleeping on the job”. Even the normally supportive *Daily Telegraph* and Conservative MPs have piled in with criticism of a leadership that has been accused of caring more about opening pubs and amusement parks than schools.

Williamson’s department is now pledging a “very big” summer school catch-up programme for schoolchildren, but it does not have an encouraging record of delivering on such promises.

The idea has already been criticised. Britain’s so-called “strictest head teacher”, Katharine Birbalsingh – whose earlier criticisms of anti-aspirational education found strong support in the Conservative Party – wrote on Twitter: “Why summer school? To catch up the kids who fell behind. Why did they fall behind? Lockdown. Did no work at home. Ah. So you think they will come to school to do the work in the holidays? Gotcha. Remind me again who has taken over the asylum?”

Truly, this pandemic has not been kind to the government, which has been badly exposed as the UK came from behind to race towards one of the highest per capita coronavirus death tolls in the world. This month, following a series of U-turns and rows over education, it has faced some of its worst criticism yet.

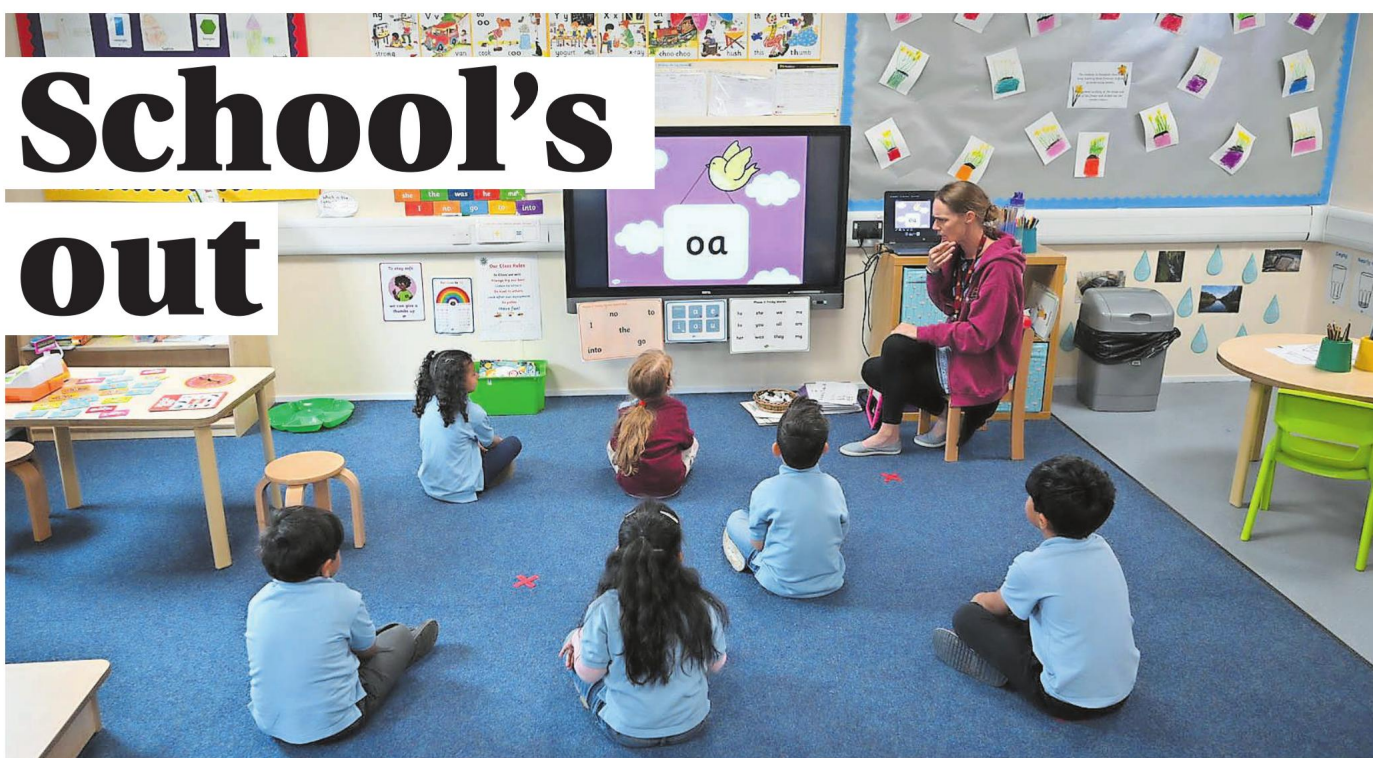
It is becoming increasingly clear that even in September there may not be normal, undisrupted schooling.

“I can’t see us returning properly this side of Christmas, if that,” Robert, chair of governors at a secondary school, told me.

And now, less than three months after the cancellation of this summer’s GCSEs and A-levels, next summer’s testing also looks in doubt, with educators calling for the nature and content for exams to be changed to allow for lost teaching time.

It is a worrying time, especially for poorer and more vulnerable children, says David Laws, a former education minister and now executive chairman of the Education Policy Institute.

“When all of this started people assumed schools would be locked down for a few months. There would be learning loss but people would be back to normal to September at worst,” he said.



Now even without a possible second wave of the pandemic, a widening attainment gap is a rapidly growing concern.

Laws called for a serious government plan explaining to schools how they can deliver catch-up learning, and greater clarity around expectations for September. “We can’t deliver certainty, but there needs to be a clear plan on the assumption that schools will go back and a Plan B if they can’t.”

The uncertain science around child infectiousness and the increasingly febrile debate about schooling is feeding through to families, and comes as the government and unions trade barbs instead of collaborating.

At the same time, we are treated to reports of Danish teachers demonstrating how easy it is to reopen schools with a bit of foresight and some hazard tape. “Why are we so catastrophically behind?” is a perennial lament on parent WhatsApp groups.

Yet the international picture is more nuanced. Firstly, many countries went into lockdown before we did, meaning that they also emerged earlier. Less time lost, fewer remaining infections and decent testing and tracing provided a safer environment for schools to reopen. You can attack this government for not locking down earlier, insufficient PPE, testing or planning, and for losing public trust. But, with infections still high and a second wave uncertain, less so for failing to open schools more quickly.

Few countries have everyone back. Even Sweden, famously open throughout the pandemic, still has no physical schooling at the top of secondary schools. Italy has not opened at all. In countries with experiences as diverse as France and South Korea, some reopened schools closed again rapidly after infections appeared.

Those that are open are almost unrecognizable. Social distancing, outdoor classes, plastic screens between pupils, relentless handwashing, a trimmed curriculum and small classes of

DISTANCED LEARNING: Pupils in a reception class at Brambles Primary Academy in Huddersfield

Photo: Getty Images

children rotating between home and school are becoming the norm. The provision is blended – new buzzword alert – between teaching at school and online at the home. It’s a pattern likely to be replicated here.

Fiona Boulton, chair of the Headmasters’ and Headmistresses’ Conference, says the pandemic has been testing the ingenuity of teachers like never before.

“It’s never been busier... You must be agile and creative. When lockdown was announced, within three days we had to come up with a whole new school,” explains Boulton, also headmistress of Guildford High School. She’s offering virtual teaching to large groups across schools, welcoming primary pupils into classrooms, and devising a bespoke plan for September: “Everything is on the table.”

Emma, a state secondary teacher, says her workload includes ‘live’ remote teaching and pre-recorded video lessons, as well as helping other, older teachers grapple with the kind of IT they never signed up for.

While online teaching is intense, it has surprising benefits – no banter, no showing off and no need for crowd control means that some are even learning more than usual, including the previously disillusioned.

A constant stream of changing government advice coupled with a lack of consultation hasn’t helped an already daunting task. Heads says they often only hear a new policy when announced in briefings – most drastically the sudden decision to cancel summer exams. If the Treasury can consult and adapt, they say, why can’t the DfE?

Teachers also complain that much advice is contradictory. It’s impossible to keep classes to bubbles of around 15 yet avoid a rota system discouraged by government. Suggestions for using public buildings and retired teachers to overcome the effective doubling of schools at a time when existing teachers may be off sick might be interesting, but

don’t seem to take into account the full extent of the logistical problem.

And, with so much left to individual schools, not all were able to rise to the challenge. One father with three children at different schools complained to me that while one received good tuition, the others had unsuitable work. His dyslexic son had no help at all.

In disadvantaged schools the challenges multiply exponentially: pupils need more help, funding is scarce and due to retention problems the teachers can be less sure of themselves, yet parents are less able to help. Their learning environments is poor. Devices are lacking.

A first step would be to provide technology to these homes, said Dr Rebecca Montacute, from the Sutton Trust. But it’s still difficult to keep these children engaged and their parents are judged less likely to support a partial return to school.

“My biggest worry would be that if more children go in part-time and online provision winds down to enable more teaching in school, we could get middle class children going in and these disadvantaged children will get even less education.”

With the pandemic being so life-changing, it does seem to beg the question as to why an even more radical approach isn’t being welcomed. Why, for instance, is the UK’s famously relentless education process, with its many high-stakes exams, not relaxed a bit by pressing the pause button, maybe extending the year to Christmas and beyond? However, the knock-on impact seems so complicated that ministers are seeking to avoid such a scenario.

Shame. Since this could also help mitigate against the other precious things that have been lost. “When shutdown was announced, I realised that they wouldn’t get their concerts, their proms, their sports events. That my year 13s would just disappear, hastily leaving the school with nothing,” said Emma. “It was the saddest day. I went into my office and cried.”

Tortois^ə.



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My patriotic duty

Alastair Campbell

Editor-at-Large



So, here we go... another column to write. It's something I've done most of my adult life, starting with a sports column on the *Tavistock Times* in my first week as a trainee reporter more than 40 years ago. Even when I worked for Tony Blair, I found time to write regular columns for *Tribune*, and for the Burnley FC matchday programme.

I have written a column in *The New European* virtually every week since the paper was founded. And, since the word coronavirus replaced Brexit and football as the top two subjects of conversation, I have written more than 100 different pieces for different publications in different parts of the world. What else was I supposed to do in lockdown? (And before anyone says, you must be raking it in, many don't pay, and those that do don't pay like they used to!)

I did laugh on receiving via my website the other day an email from someone who asked me: "Is that all you f***ing do all day, sit up in your f***ing office, writing about how f***ing useless Boris Johnson is?" He addressed me by use of a C-word that was not, I may say, C for Campbell, and signed himself off as, simply, "A TRUE Patriot".

Well no, TRUE Patriot, it's not that I f***ing do. I am brushing up my German. I have been practising my bagpipes. I have finished a couple of books. Last week, I did a series of Zoom interviews with different people about how they have coped, mental health wise, in lockdown. I have written not just about Covid, but sport, music, culture. But yes, I confess that a fair bit of my time, I sit at my screen and set out how uniquely unfortunate the country is, to have during such a serious crisis such an unserious prime minister and such a second-rate team.

TRUE Patriot took exception to my posting on social media the illustrations on three articles I had written for foreign papers. He felt I should be banging the drum for what a great country we are, not telling Johnny Foreigner that BoJo was balling everything up. Though frankly, TP – can I call you TP, or do you insist on your full name? – I think the world has in the main already made up its mind that BoJo has balled it up, which is why so many papers were keen to have articles on that theme.

Spain's *El País* used an illustration almost as good as those by Chris Barker which regularly make *The New European* front pages works of art as well as political commentary. It was of Johnson, a red nose indicating the clownishness

for which he is now globally famous, standing behind a lectern which had morphed into a coffin.

The Netherland's *NRC Handelsblad* illustrated my article with more of a traditional cartoon, Johnson the overweight spiv, an emaciated, Dominic Cummings behind him. The Canadian paper, the *Globe and Mail*, opted for a photo of Johnson in the Commons trying, and failing, to look serious and statesmanlike.

I know I probably shouldn't, but I couldn't resist sending TRUE Patriot other pieces I have written.

Italy's *Il Foglio* had a nice short headline, easily understood by anyone, "*Il Coronofiasco di BoJo*". The Slovakian *Spectator* (no relation to the British version, whose chairman Andrew Neil and editor Fraser Nelson are yet to breathe a word publicly about the misleading article Cummings' wife Mary Wakefield wrote about their "London lockdown") went more on the positive I said about their government's handling, than the negative about Johnson.

'Slovakia 10 Britain 0' was a fair assessment of the analysis I had made of their respective leaders' respective crisis management skills and outcome.

The *New Zealand Herald* went for the same approach, headlining on how Jacinda Ardern, their hard-working, empathetic, hugely effective (spot the difference) prime minister, was "putting UK to shame". Likewise in France, it was the comparison between their leader and ours that interested *L'Express*... "You French don't know how lucky you are" (to have Macron rather than Johnson in charge.) And *Ethnos*, in Greece, a country more used to basket-case headlines than we are, but which has had a very good crisis, topped the article with the accurate statement: "Johnson is a liar and incapable, Greece can walk with head high."

Berlingske, Denmark's main daily, ran with "Coronavirus has exposed Johnson as a charlatan". Norway's *Aftenposten* and Croatia's *Jutarnji* picked up on my line that Johnson made me feel ashamed

CLOWNISH:
Alastair Campbell's column in Spanish daily *El País*

Sentir vergüenza de tu país es horrible

ALASTAIR CAMPBELL

Hace tiempo que sabemos que Johnson es un mentiroso. Lo que la pandemia ha puesto de relieve es que también es un incompetente en serio. No es exagerado decir que la nota de su gestión es un cero



Un líder se ha convertido en el líder del país, y está consiguiendo que seamos el buenisimo del mundo

Johnson es un charlatán totalmente desprejuiciado para un cargo de alto nivel, y no digamos para el más alto

El mundo es un escenario. No es un escenario realista. No es un escenario que se pueda controlar. No es un escenario que se pueda predecir. No es un escenario que se pueda evitar. No es un escenario que se pueda cambiar. No es un escenario que se pueda mejorar. No es un escenario que se pueda salvar. No es un escenario que se pueda vivir. No es un escenario que se pueda amar. No es un escenario que se pueda odiar. No es un escenario que se pueda ignorar. No es un escenario que se pueda olvidar. No es un escenario que se pueda borrar. No es un escenario que se pueda crear. No es un escenario que se pueda destruir. No es un escenario que se pueda renacer. No es un escenario que se pueda morir. No es un escenario que se pueda resucitar. No es un escenario que se pueda volver a la vida. No es un escenario que se pueda escapar. No es un escenario que se pueda huir. No es un escenario que se pueda vencer. No es un escenario que se pueda derrotar. No es un escenario que se pueda conquistar. No es un escenario que se pueda gobernar. No es un escenario que se pueda dirigir. No es un escenario que se pueda liderar. No es un escenario que se pueda seguir. No es un escenario que se pueda imitar. No es un escenario que se pueda copiar. No es un escenario que se pueda plagiar. No es un escenario que se pueda falsificar. No es un escenario que se pueda contrafeitar. No es un escenario que se pueda imitar. No es un escenario que se pueda copiar. No es un escenario que se pueda plagiar. No es un escenario que se pueda falsificar. No es un escenario que se pueda contrafeitar.

to be British. Which, I hate to say, he does. TRUE Patriot feels it is unpatriotic to say this. I feel it would be unpatriotic *not* to call out this prime minister and this government for what they are doing, as loudly and as widely as I possibly can. After all, as *Le Temps* in Switzerland headlined my piece for them, he is now, with Trump, Putin and Bolsonaro, one of the main "*leaders du monde infecté*".

Having used the word 'gaslighting' in last week's column, to describe how Johnson was governing, I looked up the Wikipedia definition.

"Gaslighting is a form of psychological manipulation in which a person or a group covertly sows seeds of doubt in a targeted individual or group, making them question their own memory, perception, or judgment Using denial, misdirection, contradiction, and misinformation, gaslighting involves attempts to destabilize the victim and delegitimize the victim's beliefs. Instances can range from the denial by an abuser that previous abusive incidents occurred, to the staging of bizarre events by the abuser with the intention of disorienting the victim."

So, to take a few highlights... Johnson is "proud" of the government record on

Covid. "Apparent success." Ring of steel around care homes. Success on PPE and testing. World-class. Dominic Cummings did nothing wrong. The Johnson/Jenrick/Desmond planning allegations are clean as a disinfected Nightingale ventilator machine. The economy will come roaring back. We are winning in the Brexit talks. This is not a racist country.

It is not just that they lie, but that lying is part of the plan. Gaslighting is now the approach at prime minister's questions, where Johnson's response to Keir Starmer's serious, detailed questions is to protest that the Labour leader is not simply echoing him in saying how well everything is going.

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Covid. "Apparent success." Ring of steel around care homes. Success on PPE and testing. World-class. Dominic Cummings did nothing wrong. The Johnson/Jenrick/Desmond planning allegations are clean as a disinfected Nightingale ventilator machine. The economy will come roaring back. We are winning in the Brexit talks. This is not a racist country.

It is not just that they lie, but that lying is part of the plan. Gaslighting is now the approach at prime minister's questions, where Johnson's response to Keir Starmer's serious, detailed questions is to protest that the Labour leader is not simply echoing him in saying how well everything is going.

Johnson is "proud" of the government record on

Johnson is still, at heart, a talking point newspaper columnist, and not much else. His tweets about the Churchill statue were essentially the work of the newspaper columnist not wanting to have his readers focus on Covid – yawn, yawn, 60,000 dead, heard it all before, Churchill is always good copy... No.10's weekend sortie into the issue of transgender rights was the columnist playing into the row caused by a cultural icon, JK Rowling, and so playing games he has enjoyed playing all his journalistic career, exploiting division, making vulnerable people feel more vulnerable.

That was the *Sunday Times* taken care of. The *Mail on Sunday* had another nice, easy, tossed off talking point... "Johnson to take control of 2 metres!" This was the 'leaders lead' talking point. It is evidence of how little he does lead that it should be viewed as news, but evidence too of how lucky he is to have so many newspapers

“ It is not just that they lie, but that lying is part of the plan. Gaslighting is now the approach at prime minister's questions, where Johnson's response to Keir Starmer's serious, detailed questions is to protest that the Labour leader is not simply echoing him in saying how well everything is going

whose pages he can fill with his musings and rambles.

I have never been a prime minister, but I have worked with people who are. Of all the skills needed for the role, column writing would be relatively low down the list. The tragedy is that it is at the top of the list of skills belonging to the current occupant of No.10.

On Monday, he wrote a column for the *Daily Telegraph*, his old trivialist stamping ground. He was back on statues and Churchill and saying that, rather than implement past reviews on race, we should have another one. The headline was "Rather than tear some people down, we should build others up".

Even with slabs of metal, he is on the levelling-up theme. That really is quality gaslight work. It is all he is fit for, and it is shaming that this is who and what we have as prime minister at this time. True patriotism means realising the dangers, and fighting till he's gone, however hard, however long it takes.

AGENDA

Four years on from the referendum, JOHN KAMPFNER considers what might happen in the future, and the long term prospects for Bre-entry



John Gummer tells a fascinating if painful story. Back in 1994, the-then environment secretary under John Major invited his new German counterpart and her husband to spend the weekend with him and his wife at his constituency home in Suffolk.

That German was a certain Angela Merkel. He had been impressed in his first meeting with her in Brussels that he was keen to establish a warm repartee.

The Merkels came for a long weekend and spent much of the time chatting by the fireside. On the Friday evening, Gummer took her to his local Conservative association.

She was taken aback by the anti-European sentiments, the incessant invocation of the war: "I now know how difficult it is for you," she told him afterwards. That lesson about the English, or a certain type of English, stayed with her.

That was the era of the Maastricht rebels, the Conservative MPs whom a frustrated Major labelled as "bastards" for trying to undermine his every step.

Hostility towards the European Union might then have been a nice project, but it also betrayed a feeling that had been latent throughout, that Merkel instinctively saw.

Everything that followed was little more than a rescue operation. Brussels did whatever it took to keep the recalcitrant Brits in. We know what happened next.

Around the time of the UK's departure at the end of January, a number of pro-Remain commentators wondered out loud: when and how could we ever re-join?

It was the right question, but, as it turns out, it belonged to a different era. Covid-19 has changed all areas of politics and national life in ways that we cannot yet fathom and may well surprise us. That includes our relationship with Europe.

In the midst of the pandemic, Johnson's negotiating team has been going through the motions.

Displaying default British arrogance, it has adopted a have-your-cake-and-eat-it approach to the single market, presumably in the knowledge that it would not have been accepted.

It assumed that either the EU would cave in (a desirable but unlikely possibility) or the UK would leave blithely without a deal.

This classic British exceptionalism was reinforced by the premise that it could roll the economic damage into the deep recession that is already beginning to bite, and nobody would be able to distinguish between the two. Fortune favours the incompetent.

In the short-term these calculations are probably right. In any case, a country on the rack is hardly going to be in a fit state to discuss Europe again, no matter how disastrous Brexit turns out to be.



The young can rekindle love for the EU

Pro-Europeans, who suffered from a charisma deficit in 2016 and failed to ignite the public in the years that followed, know that they cannot be seen as pub bores or be accused of being declinists. Blaming someone for people's suffering isn't a good look.

Which is where the Black Lives Matter protests come in. I remember during one of the second referendum marches someone in their twenties saying to me, particularly when they saw the make-up of the crowd: "You have your middle-aged, middle-class passions, I have mine".

She said she voted to remain and believed Brexit would be a bad thing, but – unlike tail-end baby boomers like myself – it didn't make her wake up in the middle of the night.

Brexit was a form of identity politics – a point that was lost on the 'yes' campaign's economic-centric messaging.

It defined those who wanted to leave; it

NEW BEGINNING: Young people joined the Peoples' Vote marches. Britain's eventual return to the EU will have to be driven by the next generation of leaders – and on different terms

Photo: Getty Images

defined people like me who wanted to stay.

Most of us, we must admit, are of a certain generation. For me, jumping on a plane (or, in our greener future, a train) is who I am, what I am. Speaking European languages is not for me a nice-to-have, but I couldn't imagine a fulfilling life without it.

And, to use that cliché, I do see myself first a European, second a Briton.

For younger people – a broad term, as there is no cut-off and there are many exceptions to this rule – other forms of identity strike at their core: gender, race, sexuality and other considerations that fall into the loosely-termed diversity agenda.

These two definitions of identity are not mutually exclusive. Therein lies a possible route back to Europe.

The original European project was, for many on the continent at least, an

emotional one. By joining Germany and France together at the hip the founding fathers were making war less likely and laying the groundwork for a new sense of being, a European identity that would complement national ones, indeed possibly supersede them.

To do that involved seeking ever closer union, but somewhere along the way that was lost in translation.

It became a technical project, focusing on *acquis* and institutions, on financial wrangling and treaties. The only time the EU displayed drama was in the inevitable all-night summit negotiations, with Britain either on its own or leading an awkward squad.

So much of the alliance's good work, bringing people together on academic or cultural exchanges or on the environment, passed citizens by.

A new language will have to be found, a new *modus operandi*, not just for us



(we're out, who cares about us any more?) but for Europe's young in order for the project to survive into the next generations.

Britain's next cohort of influencers and leaders will, I hope, want to bind themselves to their peers in the EU, but it will be on different terms to now.

It's likely that Johnson's miserable government will stagger on, waving its plastic union flags, for its full term and possibly beyond. By then the bloc will have changed. Memories of Britain's petulant membership will fade.

In institutional terms, one of two scenarios will present themselves. Either the EU will have strengthened at the centre – “more Europe” as Emmanuel Macron puts it – or it will have moved more towards variable geometry (to use a phrase much loved in the 1990s), an inner core or outer core.

The latter will be more conventionally

helpful to the UK. The former is more likely. Under Article 49, accession into, or back into, the EU is a long road. Britain would have to prove its fitness and will not be in a position to seek opt-outs.

The EU would look for sustained and stable public support for Bre-entry, in order to minimise the risk of ‘Brexit, the nightmare returns’. Approval of new countries has to be unanimous.

This will take a decade or two at least. Many of the more suspicious older voters will have passed away. Yet at the same time people of all ages will have got used to the reality of life outside the EU.

Vested interests tend to align themselves to the status quo.

But re-entry into the EU will not – must not – happen because of institutional architecture or because of economic suffering, but because voters passionately want it.

Mandrake

Tim Walker

mandrake@theneweuropean.co.uk

@thattimwalker



Cummings digs in at Number 10

In a sign that **Dominic Cummings** sees his place at **Boris Johnson's** side as assured no matter how much unease about him there is on the Tory backbenches, he has quietly shut down his firm Dynamic Maps to focus full-time on his Downing Street role.

Companies House has been informed of his decision to voluntarily strike the company off its register, just weeks after **Isaac Levido** – his rival for Johnson's affections – quit as director of his market research outfit Fleetwood Strategy. Cummings, pictured, admitted Dynamic Maps, an information technology company which he set up three years ago, had made no money.

This contrasts with the fortunes of the vanquished Tory election guru **Sir Lynton Crosby**. His PR machine CT Global Holdings, which has divisions across the world, shows turnover up from £30.4 million in 2018 to £37.2m for the year ended June 30, 2019. Its 14 British subsidiary firms remain a big money-spinner, generating £14.2m last year, up from £7.4m in the 2018 accounts. CTF Partners, one of the 14 firms run by CT Global Holdings, picked up £4m in fees ahead of the 2017 general election, when **Theresa May** lost her majority.

Talking of Cummings, Durham County Council said they had found “historic breaches of planning and building regulations” with regard to his cottage on his parents' farm where he so controversially journeyed with his family during lockdown. They have asked the Valuation Office Agency to see if the council tax being paid hadn't taken the new building work into account.



castle on the island of Brecqhou – as well as, interestingly, **Sir Nicholas Soames**, who sits on the board of one of their companies, on another occasion – but if Johnson has been there lately they are keeping schtum.

Gear change

There have been a spate of Damascene conversions lately when it comes to Boris Johnson. Columnist **Tim Montgomerie's** announcement that he's “broken” with him – it sounds like the end of a relationship – and **Piers Morgan**, who voted for him in the last election, saying he's now “done”.

Even the *Spectator*, which Johnson once edited, ran a piece asserting he isn't fit to lead.

On Sunday, **Sarah Baxter** vacated her perch as a columnist on the avidly pro-Brexit *Sunday Times* – where she'd also served as deputy editor – with a shock announcement on social media. “I'm not a Brexiteer,” she declared. Could this have been the same woman who wrote a column in September 2018 entitled “Give Boris his shot at the top job. He's earned it”? The subsidiary headline read: “Johnson will deliver no lectures on morality. Just a more cheerful Brexit.”

Clinging on

Nigel Farage's departure from LBC – apparently prompted by staff who were sick of the damage he was doing to the reputation of the radio station – makes me wonder about **Sarah Vine's** future at the *Daily Mail*.

The columnist's relationship with **Geordie Greig**, the paper's editor, is a complicated one, not least because of a disobliging story he once ran – when he was editor of the *Evening Standard* – about her husband **Michael Gove**. “I'm not sure you can compare her to Farage,” Greig's spokesman tells me. “Sarah is popular with the readers.”

Vine, pictured, caused controversy in February when she talked about her despair at the “trial by social media” that has been cited as a factor in the death of the *Love Island* presenter **Caroline Flack**. Her own media organisation had published more than 25 stories about Flack online – not all of them entirely helpful for her – between the New Year and then. An online petition calling for Vine to be sacked from the paper last year attracted support from more than 14,000 people.



Mystery guest

Sir David and Sir Frederick Barclay – the Brexit-loving *Daily Telegraph* proprietors now enjoined in an epic legal battle in the High Court over privacy – have both employed public relations professionals to attempt to ingratiate themselves to the wider public.

It's a measure perhaps of how toxic their former employee Boris Johnson has become – they paid him £270,000 a year until he became prime minister – that neither seems keen to admit to when they last communicated with him.

When he was prime minister, **David Cameron** was believed to have visited the twins'

AGENDA

Britain is far from the only country hit by the shockwaves from the killing of George Floyd. JASON WALSH reports on how protests have raised different questions for each European nation



The police killing of George Floyd echoed around the world, but the tide of iconoclasm that ebbed into Britain with the toppling of statues is only one form of the burgeoning protests. Across Europe, American events have catalysed often agonising examinations of past and present alike.

As thousands rallied across Germany in support of Black Lives Matter – inevitably the coronavirus loomed with police breaking up one Hamburg demonstration on the grounds of violating social distancing measures – the debate soon moved on to Germany itself, and whether the country has become more racist and if the concept of ‘Germanness’ extends only to white people.

The country, of course, is forced to deal with the twin agonies of its Nazi past and of East Germany. As a result Germans are more sensitive than most and, unsurprisingly, Germany has no Nazi statues to topple. Central and eastern Europe more generally long ago dealt with unwanted iconography by removing statues. In some cases, notably Budapest’s Memento Park and Lithuania’s Grutas Park, authorities created sculpture gardens, like eldritch Stalinist theme parks.

But iconography comes in forms other than marble and bronze. Take the Netherlands’ longstanding, and long controversial, Christmas tradition of *Zwarte Piet* (Black Pete), a companion of Saint Nicholas and staple at the country’s festive parades. The dress-up causes a scandal annually. Critics call it a racist blackface caricature, while defenders claim the character’s dark skin is incidental. Christmas came early this year when PM Mark Rutte, formerly a defender, changed his position earlier this month, amid anti-racism protests in the country. In a few years there “will be no *Zwarte Pieten* any more”, Rutte said.

Neighbouring Belgium’s troubled symbols, though, are undeniably material: statues of King Léopold II.

Léopold famously held the territory of what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo as a personal possession, supposedly on charitable grounds. In reality it was one of the most brutal of colonial regimes – made infamous in the writings of the outraged Roger Casement, an Anglo-Irish diplomat-cum-revolutionary, and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* – where his rule killed as many as 10 million Africans.

Protests highlight Europe’s own problems



2

With one statue of the monarch in Antwerp already removed and at least 17 others defaced, authorities now propose a range of measures, from adding contextualising plaques to removal.

The battle lines being drawn in the country are predictable: the right-wing Vlaams Belang party (‘Flemish Interest’) defends the monuments, with Wouter Vermeersch telling *Euronews*: “We are not people who want to tear down statues, change street names, or erase cultural heritage”. Green politician Tine Heyse differed, saying a decision would not be rushed “based on current events [but] it’s clear we’re

opting for decolonisation”. Interestingly, Léopold was a Francophone, so representing the other side of Belgium’s contemporary fracture to the separatists of Vlaams Belang.

Another former colonial power finds itself in a contradictory position. The home of modern republicanism, France’s guiding principle has long been the 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of the Man*. But reality and rhetoric have not always matched.

Testament to this is the sad history of Haiti. Inspired by the universalism of the French Revolution, Haitian slaves declared themselves free, rising up in what CLR James’s book *The Black Jacobins* called history’s only successful

slave revolt. But the defeated French demanded reparations for slaveholders, crippling Haiti’s economy.

Colonies from Algeria to Vietnam exposed similar contradictions: how can a France guided by the light of liberty and equality justify controlling other peoples?

There is now a campaign under way to remove a statue of Jean-Baptiste Colbert from outside the National Assembly, France’s parliament. Colbert wrote the 1685 “Black Code”. While slavery was outlawed in France, it continued in some colonies – and Colbert’s code governed it.

As yet, statues are not under sustained attack. At least not in the ‘Hexagon’ of mainland France; two depicting



EXPERTISE



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HOME TRUTHS:
1 Anti-racism protesters on the monument in the Place de la Republique, Paris

2 A Black Lives Matter protest in Italy

Photo: Getty Images

abolitionist Victor Schoelcher have been smashed in the overseas territory of Martinique. Demonstrators issued a statement saying “Schoelcher is not our saviour”, while president Emmanuel Macron condemned the acts, saying: “By abolishing slavery 172 years ago, Victor Schoelcher made France great”.

For the most part the focus is contemporary: police and protesters clashed in cities across France on Sunday at demonstrations accusing officers of systemic racism. Floyd’s killing in Minneapolis has refocused attention on the death of 24-year-old Adama Traoré, who died after being restrained by police in 2016, and recent protests have honoured both men.

Last week interior minister Christophe Castaner said some police had “failed in their republican duty”, and banned chokeholds. Police responded by protesting: throwing handcuffs to the ground and complaining accusations of racism were unfounded. Speaking to the nation on Sunday, Macron asked the public to show more faith in the police, but use of force is a perennial flashpoint. December’s strikes saw violent confrontations between officers and strikers and the handling of the *gilets jaunes* was far from gentle.

Still, Macron addressed the issue directly: “I say to you very clearly tonight, dear compatriots, the Republic will not erase any trace nor name from

its history. It will not forget any of its works. It will not unbolt a statue.”

But, in what at times seems a reversal of respective national characters of France and Britain – where the debate being raised risks calcifying on the merits of Winston Churchill – French battle lines today are drawn more in the realm of the practical than the symbolic.

Or perhaps it’s simply because statues, while far from uncommon, are not the only method of memorial. France has never been averse to naming and re-naming streets, something paid testament by the endless Avenues de General de Gaulle and Rues Descartes peppering the country, not to mention the

saga of Rue du Brexit, named by a local National Front mayor and located in a ghostly industrial estate near Nîmes.

Ireland, never a colonial power, instead a former colony, is also revisiting its past – not for the first time. The Irish state, like France revolutionary and republican but, unlike France, post-colonial, is immune neither to iconoclasm nor reinterpretation.

In 1966 the IRA blew up Nelson’s Pillar in Dublin, the statue that dominated the capital’s skyline. Today the debate is more complex, taking in issues old and new. In January a planned commemoration of the colonial police, the Royal Irish Constabulary and “Black and Tans” (a British paramilitary force named for its uniform), was hastily cancelled in the face of widespread outrage. With the centenary of its civil war looming, Ireland is lurching toward more disputes about the past. What was not expected was that these would take place in the context of a global debate inspired by Black Lives Matter.

Ireland’s self-image as a nation founded in revolt put the country in a comfortable position: victim not aggressor, victorious in struggle against a stronger enemy. Yet modern Ireland will not get off scot free. Take so-called ‘direct provision’, where asylum seekers are given food and board but often left to languish. Even the government agrees it is a problem – up to a point. Speaking in parliament outgoing taoiseach Leo Varadkar said: “We don’t need to look across the Atlantic to find racism” but added that while direct provision was “substandard” it was nonetheless “a service provided by the state” and “not the same thing” as being killed by police.

Italy and Spain, battered by the pandemic, have also seen large demonstrations triggered by Floyd’s death. But the Italian-born but Spanish-funded Christopher Columbus, who fell from grace in recent decades – once celebrated as the ‘discoverer’ of the Americas, and now vilified as a slaver and *genocidaire* – is not the focus. Which is not to say Columbus will escape: three statues have been attacked in the US, and a monument in Ireland daubed.

However, Italy’s protests focussed on contemporary issues, notably recent waves of migration. Campaigners Italians Without Citizenship demanded rights for the estimated million who have arrived in Italy but find themselves unable to become citizens.

Spain’s protests were gatherings focussed on the killing of Floyd, albeit with a visible pro-migration component. So, while Real Madrid’s Brazilian defender Marcelo made a nod to the Black Lives Matter movement on Sunday, celebrating by “taking a knee” after scoring against Eibar, Spain like other European countries finds itself forced to face its own accusations of racism.

Indeed, in 2019 Spain found itself the main destination for desperate refugees crossing the Mediterranean following moves to curb flows from north Africa to Italy and Greece. This year the lockdown met head on with a scandal over working conditions for migrant labourers on Spanish farms, when workers were found to be living in makeshift shelters without food or running water.

United in protest across the continent, Europeans may look askance at US police brutality, but there remain plenty of questions closer to home, many of them far from historical.

AGENDA

So-called culture war is clutching at straw men

Where were you when you heard culture war had been declared? When do we dig out our culture war shelters? Will our culture war ration books arrive soon?

All these questions and more need answering in the wake of the news that we are at a state of culture war with ourselves, announced (as most things are these days) through the columns of the *Daily Telegraph*.

"For far too long, Conservatives have fought shy of our culture wars, hoping they could keep power by winning on the economy. These wars are now, unfortunately, unavoidable," wailed Charles Moore, strapping on his tin helmet.

"Our freedom is under threat from an American-exported culture war," booms Madeline Grant, recently romantically linked with the actor, free-thinker and total oddball Laurence Fox.

Talking of oddball Foxes, here comes banished Brexiteer Liam, taking time out from his long search for relevance to warn *Telegraph* readers about "the brutish, rigid and narrowly defined nightmare society that the hard left would have us be".

And of course there's the prime minister himself, addressing the issue of structural racism with a paywalled *Telegraph* column which devoted fewer than a quarter of its 1,000 words to structural racism, droning on instead about an imaginary culture war plot to topple statues of Winston Churchill. Johnson has since placed his commission into structural racism in the hands of No.10 policy unit chief Munira Mirza, who denies that structural racism even exists.

Steve Anglesey



Alas for Mirza and for us all, the disproportionate Covid-19 mortality rates in BAME communities do seem to hint at evidence of the existence of structural racism. But where, beyond the witterings of the *Telegraph* high table is conclusive evidence for the existence of culture war in the UK? Literally no-one bar Johnson has talked of throwing statues of Churchill into the sea and the trans rights issues which No.10 seems keen on weaponising are marginal to many voters in a way that, say, Leave vs Remain was not.

Civilised societies have ongoing and occasionally fractious, often campus-led, debates about attitudes to race, sex and history. It is a very different sort of society which attempts to characterise these ongoing debates as revolutionary attempts to subvert, dismantle and replace all we hold dear.

Or perhaps that has happened already, since Peter Hitchens whispers to his *Mail on Sunday* readers that in today's Britain, "The Left are already in control of every lever of power and influence." You know, apart running from the actual government.

Talking of which, is it any surprise to see them trying on this whole thing for size? "Culture war is the last refuge of a scoundrel," as Samuel Johnson nearly said, and this lot are already scrabbling

for last chances. Election goodwill has been squandered through negligence over coronavirus and arrogance over Dominic Cummings. They are being schooled on policy by a 22-year-old Manchester United forward. Relaunches during which Boris Johnson "takes control" of a problem you might have thought he'd have control of anyway, being prime minister and all that, now happen weekly.

Next they will deliver a no-deal Brexit that polls show the vast majority of people, including Red Wall voters, do not want – one that is likely to make business closures and redundancies more likely and one that would have created supermarket shortages had the government not U-turned on border controls with the EU last week.

No wonder, then, that after a brief dalliance with a national campaign against obesity featuring subsidised bicycles for all, Johnson and Cummings are now seeking to claw back lost ground by building up their straw man of culture war.

Even before the last election there were reports of No.10 polling issues like trans rights to see whether these might rile up some traditional Labour areas even more than Brexit; in the event Red Wall voters' antipathy towards Jeremy Corbyn, together with their general Brexit fatigue, meant they went unweaponised – until now.

The hope, as Moore hinted to *Telegraph* readers, is to revive memories of four years ago. "A refrain of some Remainers was that there was something shameful about Britain as an independent country, proud of its history. Leave won the 2016



OLD SCHOOL: The Major played by Ballard Berkeley, left, and John Cleese in *Fawlty Towers* (1979)

Photo: Getty Images

referendum because most voters did not agree," he wrote.

So it will be billed as one last battle against the metropolitan elites and "campaigning newspapers" for the right to protect statues under no threat and the right for Major Gowen to say racist words in a 45-year-old episode of *Fawlty Towers*. Pretty desperate stuff, you might think – not so much clutching at straw men than clutching at straws. But there is another thing to consider. If, as seems increasingly likely, the ultimate culture warrior that is Donald Trump loses his re-election battle in five months' time, the UK culture war will be quietly declared over and it will be back to the drawing board once again.

What comes then? Subsidised bike, anyone? Cones hotline?

STEVE'S SELECTION

PETER HITCHENS

Visiting Oxford to witness a Rhodes statue demo at which he refused to 'take a knee', the *Mail on Sunday* columnist was revulsed by new street markings readied for the return of retail, which advised shoppers to walk in one direction. "Stand there. Do this. Wear that. Wait here. Stay home. Now they tell us which way to walk," raged Hitchens on Twitter. Some wondered how he'd managed to cope with road signs, to which I can reveal a few years back I really did see Peter riding his bike down busy Kensington High Street in the wrong lane – no doubt making excellent time but not exactly safe for him or drivers of oncoming vehicles!



THREAT: Nigel Farage
Photo: Getty Images

NIGEL FARAGE

The nicotine-stained man-frog "stepped down" from his LBC radio job after comparing Black Lives Matter protestors to the Taliban (cooler heads like Sarah Vine and Ann Widdecombe merely compared them to Isis) and accusing police of a "total surrender" by taking the knee. Farage then threatened to damage the government still further by relaunching his Brexit Party and running in the next Tory-held by-election seat to split the pro-Leave vote, a threat which might have carried more weight had he not taken part in a "total surrender" at the last general election, when 300+ Brexit Party candidates were suddenly stood down to protect the party who Farage now accuses of "pitiful... cowardice in the face of anarchic Marxism".

DARREN GRIMES

Eager to make his mark on the culture war debate, our Darren wrote: "Gary Lineker says it's brave to 'speak out' on racism. Is it? Surely it would be even more courageous to be overtly racist in 2020, an action that in most cases you'd risk losing your job over? Down to the brilliant fact that this country really isn't all that racist at all!" Yes indeed, and while I was thinking I'd be brave here by speaking out against stupidity, I now realise that it's even more courageous for people like Darren to be overtly stupid in 2020, an action that in most cases you'd risk losing your credibility over! Wisely, Grimsby has since moved on to safer ground, like speculating what Dr Martin Luther King might have meant by his "I have a dream speech"!

TED VERITY

What has become of the tolerant Britain we love?" asked the *Mail on Sunday's* front page, next to an image showing a masked man on the Football Lads' Alliance protest punching a dreadlocked counter-protestor. Perhaps an answer can be found in the *Daily Mail* front pages Verity helped organise in his years as the paper's deputy editor under Paul Dacre. Headlines included "208,000 passports issued to migrants in one year", "Migrants handed £5bn tax credits", "Teachers battle to cope with influx of migrants", "4 in 5 new nurses on NHS wards are foreign", "There ARE too many migrants" and "You can't ignore migration now" – this last one being something that a *Mail* reader would have found particularly hard to do...

EXPERTISE

BLIND ALLEY: The P4 laboratory on the campus of the Wuhan Institute of Virology in China's central Hubei province

Photo: Getty Images



THE LABORATORY CONSPIRACY

All possibilities remain in the search for the ultimate source of Covid-19. But Donald Trump's unsupported allegations about its emergence from a Wuhan lab are actually hindering vital investigations, says **GILES WHITTELL**



The first known human to be infected with Covid-19 hasn't been named, but we do know this: he was over 70, suffered from dementia and lived "four or five buses" from downtown Wuhan.

He seldom went out. He certainly had no connection with the Huanan Seafood Market that until last month was the focus of most scientific efforts to find the origin of the coronavirus pandemic.

And we can keep counting. Three of the first four patients went nowhere near that market. Twenty seven of the first 41 did have a connection with it, but 13 didn't. Which is why Dr Filippa Lentzos, a biosecurity expert at King's College, London, says it's "valid to look for other plausible explanations".

These are the dispassionate words of a

scientist. They're also the kind of words that feed a rumour mill that's also being fed and used by a panicky US administration in a state of permanent crisis.

For nearly three months, senior US officials and their chief executive have sought to use uncertainty about the origin of the pandemic to shift the blame for America's response to it. The result is extraordinary: faced with one of the most urgent scientific mysteries in history, with more resources to help solve it than any other country, the world's leading superpower has headed down a series of blind alleys, heedless of the damage to its most important international relationships and its reputation.

For Lentzos, plausible explanations for the Covid-19 outbreak include the idea

that humans brought the virus to the market from elsewhere. They might have encountered it in or near any one of hundreds of caves in central and southern China that host bat colonies studied by virologists. They might have encountered it in other markets or while working on farmland.

And then there are the labs. Wuhan is home to two big virology labs – the Wuhan Centre for Disease Control, which is not a 'high containment' facility built for work on dangerous pathogens, and the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), which is.

The current occupant of the White House would like, almost more than

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From page 23

anything, to pin the whole pandemic on the WIV. If the outbreak could be blamed on avoidable Chinese error that Beijing tried to cover up, so could 20 million jobs and 100,000 deaths. It would be worth a try, at any rate. As US secretary of state Mike Pompeo likes to remind reporters, a recent Pew survey found that two thirds of Americans already have a negative view of China's handling of the pandemic.

Like the administration's stand-off with the World Health Organisation – and indeed with millions of Americans over the legacy of George Floyd, the murdered Minneapolis security guard – this positioning is all about the 3rd of November; about whether or not Donald Trump will be re-elected for four more years.

"If you can't run on the economy any more and you can't run on competence because you've bungled the response to Covid, you need to run on something else," says a former senior US diplomat. "Running against China appeals on several layers. They bungled the response too. They deserve to shoulder a great deal of responsibility and blame. And Trump's 2016 campaign appealed to nativist impulses and that worked out for him quite well."

At first the Trump administration pushed a theory that the virus was manufactured in the lab.

"Those narratives are plainly mis- or disinformation," says Lentzos. "But it is possible that it could have originated as a result of basic safety lapses in the course of scientific research. It could have been leaked through poorly incinerated research animals, like cats or rats. That research wouldn't necessarily have had anything to do with the lab's own work. [The virus] could have been brought in from field work. Accidents happen. They happen at very reputable institutions. So it is possible that it happened at the WIV."

So the search is for a 'spillover event' – back through epidemiological records and down pathways mapped by complex genetic trees to the moment the SARS-CoV-2 virus first leapt from animal to human.

There is no evidence that it happened at the lab and plenty that it happened somewhere on the front line between human habitat and what remains of the natural world. But no one has pinpointed it yet and until they do, anything is theoretically possible.

In political terms we are between the Kennedy assassination and the Warren Report; between the dodgy dossier and the invasion of Iraq. We are at a moment when it's as hard as ever to prove a negative but easy to dress up expedient theories as statecraft.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES:

1 A truck leaves the Huanan Seafood Market, originally identified as a possible point of origin of the Covid-19 outbreak

2 Virologist Shi Zheng-li, left, at work in the P4 laboratory at the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) in 2017

3 The P4 lab is one of just a handful in the world authorised to handle Class 4 pathogens – dangerous viruses posing a high risk of person-to-person transmission

4 President Donald Trump hopes to win a second term when US voters go to the polls in November

Photos: Getty Images

Team Trump has proved adept at seizing this sort of moment to sow uncertainty, spread their alternative facts. Thus, on April 30, the president said he had a "high degree" of confidence that the virus came from a lab. Five days later, Pompeo said there was "enormous evidence" for it.

Between those two dates the first of two reports that at first seemed to support the administration appeared – in Australia. On the front page and five inside pages of the (Australian) *Daily Telegraph*, the award-winning Sharri Markson wrote about a 15-page dossier she'd seen describing the disappearance of Chinese doctors, the destruction of Chinese virus samples and a broader "assault on international transparency" that cost tens of thousands of lives".

The second report emerged a week later via NBC News in the US. It was produced by a Pentagon subcontractor called MACE and floated a theory that there had been a "hazardous event" at the WIV in October 2019.

Both reports were quickly dismantled. The first was traced by a former Australian foreign minister, Bob Carr, to the US embassy in Canberra, which he accused of inflating baseless claims about the lab. (Lentzos, who has also seen it, says it contained "no real evidence at all".) The second based its case on a cancelled conference and suspicious traffic diversions near the lab, but the conference wasn't cancelled and the traffic was diverted because of roadworks.

In a sense, to the Trump administration and its outriders, none of these collisions with reality mattered. By the time the claims were exposed to proper scrutiny they had been fed through pro-Trump media in the US and achieved their goal of shifting the lab theory from the fringe to the conservative mainstream.

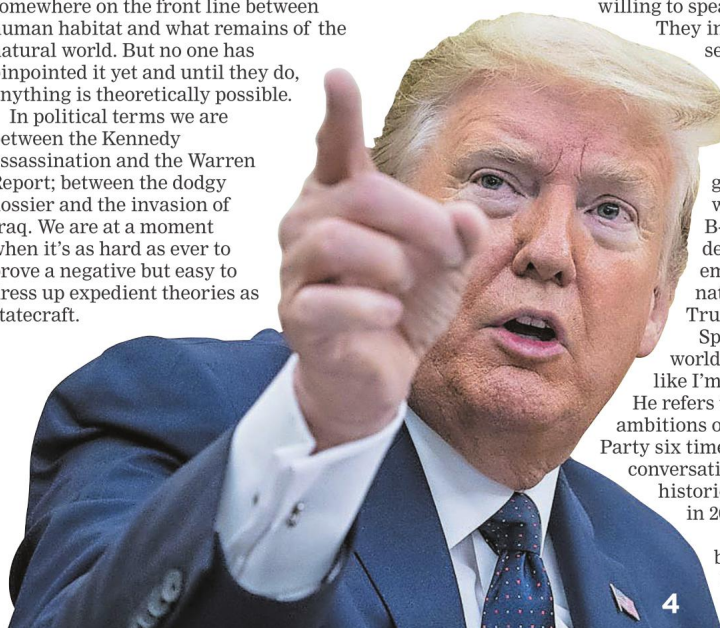
A third of Americans now believe it to be fact, and many will have absorbed the idea promoted by Tucker Carlson, one of Trump's favourite Fox News hosts, that the pandemic has become part of president Xi Jinping's grand plan for a "Chinese century".

Converting thoughts into threats requires authoritative-sounding voices, and there are plenty of China hawks willing to speak for the administration.

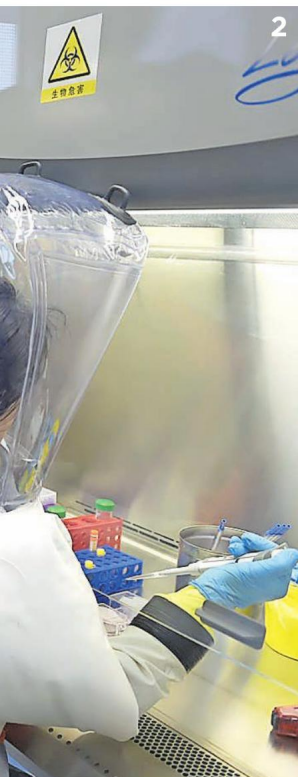
They include Peter Navarro, a senior assistant to the president and author of *Death by China*; Jon Huntsman, a former US ambassador to China; and retired Air Force general Robert Spalding, who has flown B-2s and B-52s and served as both defence attache to the US embassy in Beijing and a national security advisor to Trump.

Spalding is genial and worldly on the phone, but it feels like I'm dialling back to the 1980s. He refers to the crimes and ambitions of the Chinese Communist Party six times in a 25-minute conversation and his preferred historical analogy for Hong Kong in 2020 is Berlin in 1948.

As the lab theories took a beating last month, people like Spalding moved on. "The relevant issue now is why the pandemic came



EXPERTISE



from China,” he says. “It clearly came because of deliberate action by the Chinese Communist Party.” He lists familiar talking points about Chinese withholding of information about early human-to-human transmission of the virus and hoarding protective gear – talking points which may turn out to be true but remain unconfirmed – and then effectively accuses Beijing of weaponising Covid by continuing to allow international flights while grounding domestic ones around the time of Chinese New Year.

“They definitely caused the pandemic,” he says. “It doesn’t matter where the virus came from. Once it’s out, it’s out.”

Except that it does matter where the virus came from. Enormously.

Back in the real world, horseshoe bats living in caves in Yunnan province (1,500 km from Wuhan) have been identified as a likely natural reservoir of SARS-CoV-2. There could be others, but a study in *Nature* on February 3 found a 96% genetic match between a coronavirus in the bats and the one that by then had travelled round the world.

The former could be progenitors of the latter. The virus in the bats could have mutated into the one that causes Covid-19, jumping directly to humans or via an intermediary species such as the pangolin. Scientists need to track back to the original spillover event and the animal population from which it came – not to satisfy their curiosity, but to head off the next pandemic.

Earlier this month another study, not yet peer reviewed but co-authored by leading virologists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, reported that SARS-CoV-2 was very similar to the original SARS virus in the late stage of the 2003 epidemic. By that time the SARS virus “had developed several adaptations for human transmission”, the authors wrote.

They continued: “Any existing pools of SARS-CoV-2 progenitors would be particularly dangerous if similarly well adapted for human transmission.”

Translation: this could easily happen all over again. In fact, as Lentzos, the biosecurity expert notes, it could have happened all over again already: “It’s hugely important to understand how this happened because we need to find out if there were one or multiple spillover events.”

And there’s another thing. Scientists need to be able to set the record straight because of the old cliché. This is a global problem needing a global solution, which in turn has to rest on the best possible information. And that information is extremely hard to assemble when the world’s dominant bully pulpit prefers conspiracy theories.

There are two reasons for this, and the first is a paradox. The lab theory needs to be properly investigated if only to rule it out, but many mainstream experts won’t go near it for fear of being tainted by association with Trump.

“The way the Trump administration is pushing this theory means we almost can’t look into it because we’re seen as in league with Trump,” says Lentzos.

“There are researchers who should know better who wrote it off as a possibility because it was [seen as] disinformation. We weren’t allowing ourselves to be the sceptical researchers that we should be.”

The second reason Trump’s fetish for the lab theory is slowing down the search for the spillover event is more practical.

It has led directly to funding being cut to a vital joint venture between the Wuhan lab and a New York research institute called the EcoHealth Alliance.

The route by which misinformation led to this absurd and dangerous decision is an object lesson in how the present US administration not only doesn’t function properly, but actively jeopardises the public good for personal and political goals.

On April 14, apparently after browsing the *Mail on Sunday’s* website, a Republican congressman from Florida named Matt Gaetz went on Fox News to claim that \$3.7 million of US taxpayers’ money was being funnelled to the WIV through the EcoHealth Alliance.

It wasn’t true. \$3.7 million was the alliance’s total budget for grants to other institutions. Only about \$100,000 a year went to the WIV, to help fund brave work on bat-borne viruses led by professor Shi Zheng-li, better known, even beyond scientific circles, as the Bat Woman.

Trump saw the Gaetz item and mentally filed it away. Three days later a reporter from the deeply conservative One America News network asked him about the allegedly misspent \$3.7m in one of his marathon coronavirus press conferences. Trump said he’d been looking into it. The following week, all public funding to the EcoHealth Alliance was cut.

At the end of May professor Shi and the alliance’s director, Peter Daszak, published their fullest analysis yet of bat-borne virus genomes from the caves of Yunnan province. A critic of their work pointed out that it analyses only 440 of the roughly 15,000 ‘bases’ (steps in the RNA sequence) in each genome, and doesn’t get us much closer to knowing which could leap to humans.

“We were planning to get full genome sequences from these samples,” Daszak told *Science* magazine. “We won’t be able to do that work without the funding, unfortunately.”

It was a little pat, but it made the point.

In the convulsions following the murder of George Floyd by a white policeman in Minneapolis, Trump has glimpsed a new way to define himself to voters – as “your president of law and order”. Ostensibly it is a turn inward after his campaign to drag China, the Wuhan lab and the WHO into domestic American politics as scapegoats. But the doctrine of Trump First means he is unlikely to let those scapegoats lie.

When the tear gas clears, he still has a colossal tragedy to explain away to American voters. In this context, his antics are all of a piece and the sound they make, like the sound of water rushing through the shingles on *Dover Beach*, is the long, withdrawing roar of America’s retreat.

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EXPERTISE

Long before there was Donald Trump, there was Huey Long. **RICHARD LUCK** recalls the populist politician whose career ultimately ended in tragedy, rather than the presidency



He came from out of the Louisiana Bayou, Huey Pierce Long Jr. Had he been born in another age or another locale, he may have become little more than a character akin to Boss Hogg, the down-home heavy who was forever giving Bo and Luke a hard time in *The Dukes Of Hazzard*.

But because of where he lived, because of when he lived and because of who he was related to, Huey Long found himself in so powerful a position that, when he was asked to write his memoirs, he plumped for that most modest of titles *My First Days in the White House*.

Long never made it to Pennsylvania Avenue. He did, however, make it to the Oscars... in a sense. The Robert Rossen film, *All The King's Men* – adapted from a Robert Penn Warden novel – told the story of a provincial politician very much in the Long mould. It won the 1950 Academy Awards for Best Actor (Broderick Crawford), Best Supporting Actress (Mercedes McCambridge) and Best Picture.

Penn Warden's book was adapted for the big screen a second time in 2006 by Steven Zaillian, this time with Sean Penn playing the Long-alike Willie Stark. As excellent as Rossen's movie is – and Zaillian's version isn't – fictionalising the life and times of the man who was known as 'the Kingfish' is a tricky task since so much of Huey Long's existence sounds like it was drawn directly from the realms of fiction.

He was born near Winnfield, Louisiana, in 1893. The seventh of nine children, the young Huey experienced the same privations as all those who had the misfortune to be born in the poorest parish of one of America's poorest states.

Little wonder he felt motivated to improve his family's lot, and even less surprising still that he and his townfolk blamed their station in life upon the Pelican State's bigwigs who'd been filling their bellies in Baton Rouge while the rest of the region starved.

Convinced that a career in the law would give him the opportunity to make a good living while sticking it to The Man, Long applied to Louisiana State University. Though admitted while still in his teens, he spent four years working as a salesman so he could afford board and tuition. A bright lad – he was expelled from school for being a smart arse – Huey took and passed the bar exam within a year of enrolling in LSU.

And who was the first organisation he decided to stick it to? None other than the Standard Oil Company whose iron grip upon the state's economy would be something Long spent the rest of his career trying to loosen.

With his hatred of big business and his love of the little man giving him his first

SWAMP THING

HOW LOUISIANA'S KINGFISH THREATENED TO CONQUER AMERICA



EXPERTISE



POPULIST:

1 Louisiana senator Huey Long holds court at the bar of the Hotel New Yorker, 1935

2 Long's supporters expected him to be a candidate for President in 1936. Long was assassinated in Louisiana in September 1935

Photos: Getty Images



taste of national fame, Long's road to high estate next saw him win a place on the Louisiana Railroad Commission in 1918.

Still only in his mid-20s, it was while working for the LRC that Long cultivated the personality and approach that would see him take high office. Never short of a thing to say, the Kingfish – a nickname lifted from the anything-but-politically correct radio sensation *Amos 'n' Andy* – was big on gimmicks and razzmatazz.

Marrying radio broadcasts and brochures with endless public appearances, it wasn't long before Long was the most well-known man in the Pelican State. Fame, and infamy, lay just around the corner.

Though his first run for governor in 1924 ended in heavy defeat, Long's growing popularity made him a good bet in the 1928 gubernatorial elections. Sticking to the simple formula of championing the underdog while railing against elites, he came to power courtesy of the biggest landslide in the state's history.

Within weeks of taking office, he'd sacked every state government official who had opposed him and installed trusted friends and family members in their place, on the understanding that a percentage of their wages would be funnelled into the governor's electoral fund.

Every bit as illegal as it sounds, Long's salary-skimming, together with the way he strong-armed legislation through the state house, led to calls for the Kingfish's impeachment.

In particular, the Republican opposition objected to the five-cents-a-barrel tax he'd imposed on Standard Oil. Pointing to the massive building projects he'd got under way as well as the measures he'd brought in to improve childhood and adult literacy, Long relished having another chance to stick it to the barons. And on the occasions when his good deeds didn't win politicians around, the governor simply bribed or blackmailed them.

The eventual collapse of the impeachment proceedings left Long determined to raise not only his profile

but also his political sights. To this end, he launched his own newspaper – the *Louisiana Progress* – in 1930.

It soon became the unofficial rule that if you wanted to do business in Louisiana, you first had to buy advertising space in the *Louisiana Progress*.

Not surprisingly, such a move didn't play well everywhere and Long was soon obliged to use some of his ill-gotten gains to pay for personal protection.

His list of enemies grew longer still when, in 1931, the governor of Louisiana won a seat in the United States senate. With the Great Depression continuing to bite and Long's adoration of the underdog in step with the politics of the party's dominant figure Franklin Delano Roosevelt, he was sure to prove a hit in Washington. But could he legally hold both posts simultaneously?

Louisiana's lieutenant governor Paul Cyr claimed that he couldn't and as such, he, Cyr, ought to be recognised as governor.

Any doubts that Long had been taking notes on the European dictatorships of the day ceased to exist the moment he ordered the National Guard to surround the State Capitol in anticipation of Cyr standing down.

With another enemy vanquished, Long resigned the governorship, ensured his childhood friend Alvin King 'won' the subsequent run-off election, and then set about taking the senate by storm.

To begin with, it was senator Long's oratory that made him impossible to ignore. Then, when FDR entered the White House in 1933 and his New Deal started to pick up steam, the Kingfish set himself in opposition to the president, claiming that Roosevelt hadn't gone far enough and that the working man of America deserved an even Newer Deal.

Cue the 1934 launch of Long's 'Share our Wealth' scheme, a programme designed to finance education and military pensions through the taxation of corporations.

EXPERTISE

From page 17

"Every man a king," boomed the slogan-friendly Long. Pretty soon, America would hear the same refrain on one of the country's most popular radio broadcasts.

Radio broadcaster and Catholic priest Father Charles Coughlin had initially come to national attention through his criticisms of the resurgent Ku Klux Klan in the late 1920s. He was broadcasting to an audience of 30 million by the time he turned his fire upon those he perceived to be the real enemy of America... Jewish immigrants.

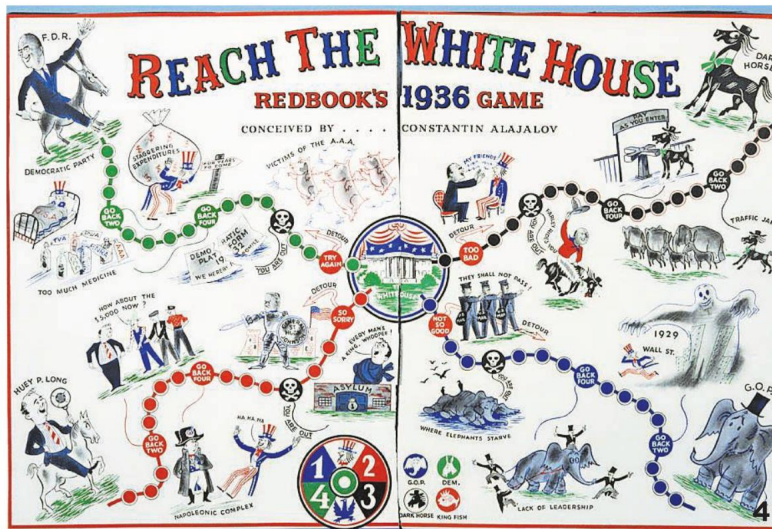
Coughlin's arguments were appalling but they went down very well in a country crippled by the Great Depression. With so many people hanging on the not-so-good Father's every word, his praise for Long and his declared determination to improve the lot of the average American carried real political weight, and led to growing speculation that Long might have a tilt at the White House at the next election, in 1936.

But could Long really have challenged as respected an incumbent as FDR? There's certainly no way in which the senator could have unseated the president through the Democratic primary process. Long, however, was of the opinion that taking on Roosevelt at the ballot box would be a great way to publicise both himself and his policies. Biographer T Harry Williams argues that, in the wake of losing the Democrat nomination, the 'Kingfish' would break away from the party proper and contest the presidential election under his 'Share Our Wealth' banner.

It might sound like pie in the sky but with Coughlin banging the drum for Long and offers of support from US farming heavyweight-turned-populist rabble-rouser Milo Reno, the senator grew increasingly convinced that he could reshape the political landscape. A nationwide speaking tour further fuelled his ambition, with raucous, well-attended rallies in the Midwest convincing Long that states such as Iowa and Pennsylvania would cheerfully vote Kingfish.

And as Long was getting excited about a tilt at the White House, the Democrat National Congress was growing increasingly concerned about the prospect of the senator splitting their vote. DNC chairman James Farley commissioned a poll, the results of which indicated that Long might receive as many as four million votes in 1936. In a hastily-written memo to president Roosevelt, Farley explained that the poll suggested "[Long] would command upwards of 100,000 votes in New York, a pivotal state in any national election. A vote of that size could easily mean the difference between victory and defeat... That number of votes would mostly come from our side and the result might spell disaster."

A fraught FDR in turn contacted William E Dodd, the US ambassador to Germany and a close friend of the president. "Long plans to be a candidate of the Hitler type for the presidency in 1936," Roosevelt wrote. "He thinks he will have 100 votes at the Democratic convention. Then he will set up as an independent with southern and mid-western progressives... Thus he hopes to defeat the Democratic Party and



LARGER THAN LIFE CHARACTER:
1 Broderick Crawford addresses supporters from the balcony of his campaign headquarters in the political drama *All the King's Men* (1949). Crawford's character Willie Stark was believed to be based on Huey Long

2 Carl Weiss is reputed to have shot Huey Long at the State Capitol in Baton Rouge. Weiss was shot dead by Long's bodyguards

3 Long is escorted by National Guard troops, 1935

4 A game published in *Redbook* magazine in 1935 depicts Long and Franklin Roosevelt in a presidential race

7 Mourners file past Long's open coffin following his assassination

Photos: Getty Images

put in a reactionary Republican. That would bring the country to such a state by 1940 that Long thinks he would be made dictator... It is an ominous situation."

While the president stared into his crystal ball, Long set about completing *My First Days in the White House*, an 'autobiography' in which he outlined how he would fight the 1936 election. Such was the confidence of the Kingfish he even named his cabinet – FDR would no doubt have been relieved to hear that he was to be kept on as secretary of the navy.

History, however, had other plans for Long, plans that came to fruition on September 8, 1935. For it was on that day that Dr Carl Weiss stormed into the Capitol building in Baton Rouge, demanding an audience with the senator. Incensed that Long had enacted legislation to demote Weiss's father-in-law – a judge on the state supreme court – the physician got into a pushing fight with the politician.

What happened next has sparked no end of conjecture. Did Weiss pull a gun and open fire on Long? Or did Long's bodyguards accidentally shoot their paymaster while trying to separate the two men mid-scuffle? Whatever the true course of events, Long was rushed to hospital, screaming "Don't let me die! I've got so much to do!"

For two days, he fought his injuries. Then, with the end in sight, Long begged his nurses for a glass of water. One of the women, clearly no fan of the Kingfish, told a colleague, "You probably should give it to him. Where he's going, I hear it's pretty hot."

Often described as a larger-than-life character, Long wasn't going to let a little thing like death wrest power far away from him.

In keeping with his wishes, the Kingfish's senate seat was inherited by his wife Rose. Then in 1948, Long's son Russell entered the senate. It was a position he'd hold for almost four decades.

If all this talk of chicanery, media manipulation and political dynasties has a familiar ring to it, comparisons between Huey Long and Donald Trump have been around as long as the latter's harboured political ambitions. Similarities between the two further extend to the willingness with which the men and their families embrace conspiracy theories.

Indeed, it was while on a flight to Washington in 1966 that a well-oiled Russell Long got talking to Louisiana's district attorney about the aspects of the Kennedy assassination that didn't add up for him. The DA in question was Jim Garrison and the events this conversation set in train were played out in Oliver Stone's *JFK*.

Incidentally, in the film, Russell Long is played by Walter Matthau who is actually the spitting image of Huey Long himself, which is quite something given that the actor was in his late sixties when he made the movie and the senator was only 42 when he died. "My face isn't so much lived in," the great Walter once remarked, "it's more vandalised."

A more fitting description of the Kingfish it's impossible to come up with. For in keeping bad company and pursuing bad practices, Huey Long might have elevated himself and his family, but the toll it took was written all over his face.

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EXPERTISE

BREXIT AND COVID ARE STOKING THE FIRES OF WELSH NATIONALISM

Adam Price, leader of Plaid Cymru, talks to **MATT WITHERS** about his party's long march to independence and how recent catalysts mean its aim of a referendum by 2030 is a realistic prospect



It is a sign of the ignorance of devolution in both much of the media and the higher echelons of the UK government that it has taken a global pandemic for people to realise it means different nations not only being able to do their own things but actually doing them. It's something that Adam Price, the leader of Plaid Cymru, muses on as we speak via Zoom from the Carmarthenshire home where he has been in lockdown for longer than most, his son having shown signs of symptoms in mid-March (all are well).

The 51-year-old hopes to lead his party to victory in next year's elections to the Senedd and lead a Welsh government which a surprising amount of Conservative commentators appeared largely ignorant of until its approach to lockdown diverged from that of Boris Johnson.

"Never in the last 21 years, post-devolution, have we ever seen such a high level of awareness of the fact that we have, you know, four different health ministers in the UK," says Price, leader of the Welsh nationalist party since 2018.

"We're even starting to hear the phrase 'the English government' or 'the English health secretary'. So that really is a huge change.

"Even within Wales, because we have a weaker media landscape in Wales in terms of home-grown newspapers etc, I think the fact that there's been daily press conferences by the Welsh government and the fact that there are distinctive policies mean that even in Wales there's a greater awareness of the significance and the reach of the national government of Wales than we've ever had in the last 21 years.

"I think it's OK to look for positives even in the most challenging of times. So I think that is certainly one of them."

Polls have shown people in Wales think the Labour-led Welsh government has handled the crisis better than the Westminster government. Plaid was initially critical of first minister Mark Drakeford's approach, but have been more supportive since it started to differ from Johnson's.

"I think that the early stage of the crisis, the Welsh government tended to follow the similar policy decisions to the Westminster government," says Price, whose pre-political career was in business.

"And I think that during that phase the Westminster government were making a lot of mistakes and the Welsh government, in aligning themselves very, very closely – this sort of four-nation approach that was talked about – were inevitably then making the same mistakes.

"The more that they've been prepared to show their independence of mind, if you like, then the more they've been backed by the public in Wales. So when they have shown that kind of independence of mind we've backed them and not only have we backed them but they've been backed by the Welsh public as well."

He thinks there is no chance of things returning to normal post-pandemic. The so-called 'Overton window' – the breadth of policies acceptable to the mainstream – having shifted. "State intervention at a vast scale, but also, I think, an acceptance more generally of a central and positive role for the government in shaping economic policy and industrial policy and the rest of it."

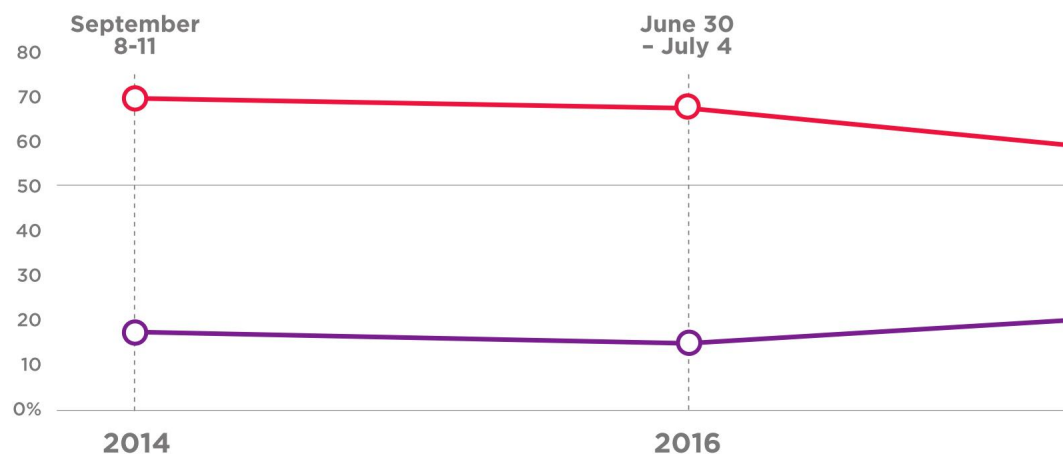
And yet Wales, to many people's surprise, voted for Brexit. A country which benefited disproportionately from EU structural funds, and which commentators saw as sharing Scotland's broad pro-Europeanism, voted to leave by 52.5% to 47.5%. Quick question then, Adam – why?

"God, yes," he sighs. "There isn't a single answer to that and there are probably as many answers to that as there were people who voted to leave the European Union. And I wouldn't presume to speak on their behalf.

"But, you know, in that mix of motivations and reasons there has been somewhere, certainly, that feeling of economic and political neglect that many



SHOULD WALES BE AN INDEPENDENT COUNTRY



EXPERTISE



1 INDY-CURIOS: Plaid Cymru leader Adam Price on the campaign trail

2 Price, who has led the Welsh nationalist party since 2018, speaks in the Senedd

Photos: Plaid Cymru - The Party of Wales.



Yet anecdotally, and not altogether surprisingly, the handling of the coronavirus crisis has also, in a way, become a national question with, Price says, people looking at the two institutions and despairing of Westminster.

“It is interesting, at least in social media what people say themselves. You have a lot of people saying ‘I never supported independence before but I am now’, you know?,” he says. “People are on that journey.

“What you get as well is the classic line from the last few years – they’ll use different words, but people say ‘I’m not a nationalist, I’ve never regarded myself as a nationalist, but...’. And there’s a ‘but’. ‘But I’m now supporting independence’ or ‘I’m indy-curious’ or ‘I’m interested’, you know?

“There’s almost like a sense of surprise at their own journey, and that shows me that this is deep and this is real. This is beyond ordinary politics in some ways, this is something that people are discussing amongst themselves.”

Wales is now where Scotland was 10 years ago, he says. Plaid’s stated aim is for a referendum by 2030. And these are strange times.

“I’m in the fortunate position compared to other Plaid Cymru leaders that, actually, independence now is more popular than Plaid Cymru,” says Price. “If you look at it in pure electoral terms then actually, you know, if everyone who supported independence now voted Plaid Cymru then I would become the first minister. That hasn’t been true in the past.”

It says much of Plaid’s journey that a party with its origins in a socially conservative Welsh-language pressure group has the first openly gay male leader of a UK political party and it is barely remarked on (“Here I am, leader of Plaid Cymru, I’m a gay dad,” he says. “These things are part of the diversity of experience in modern Wales”).

And yet, speaking as we are, amid recent protests against racism, including in Cardiff and Swansea, those self-same roots mean that Plaid has, he admits, “got to do a lot more” to reflect modern Wales.

“It’s something I’m very keen on involving and giving a leadership role for our Plaid Cymru BAME section on, because obviously they can speak far more compellingly from their own experiences as members of the BAME community in Wales.

“I think that if we as a party want to be the party of Wales then we have to be the party of all of Wales and Wales in all its diversity.”

people felt particularly in post-industrial communities like the former coalfield of south Wales but also some of the rural areas as well that have felt a similar sense of political detachment and economic decline.

“So in that context for many people Brexit will have seemed like a ‘change’ project, and obviously my fear is on the record that that change will end up not being a very positive one for many people in those very same communities.” He wants a “pragmatic and common-sense” extension to the transition period.

We talk about the state of Welsh politics. As a correspondent based in the Senedd a decade ago I would occasionally rage against the chumminess of it, with four political parties all broadly social democratic (arguably even the Welsh Tories then) and whose members drank together at Cardiff Bay’s Eli Jenkins pub every evening. But friends still there tell me, I say, that it’s now as ugly and rancorous as everywhere else.

Price – an MP from 2001 to 2010 – says: “There has been, since that time, a greater ideological divergence, certainly within the Senedd. Obviously [the] Brexit [Party] and what’s left of UKIP are out on their own, really, but there has also been, I think, a shift in the Conservative Party’s politics in the Senedd reflecting developments in the Conservative Party more generally.

“I think it’s important to have genuine political diversity in any country, I think that’s a good thing. You wouldn’t want a collaborative political culture – which I think is a positive, I think the ability to engage with each other, you know, civilly and have a fruitful dialogue I think is a good thing... but you don’t want that to turn into some kind of soggy centre where there’s no critical challenge whatsoever.

“So I think it is possible to have both a civil political culture but on the other hand to provide people with real political choices as well.”

Second quickfire question, then: why has the desire for Welsh independence so lagged behind that of Scotland?

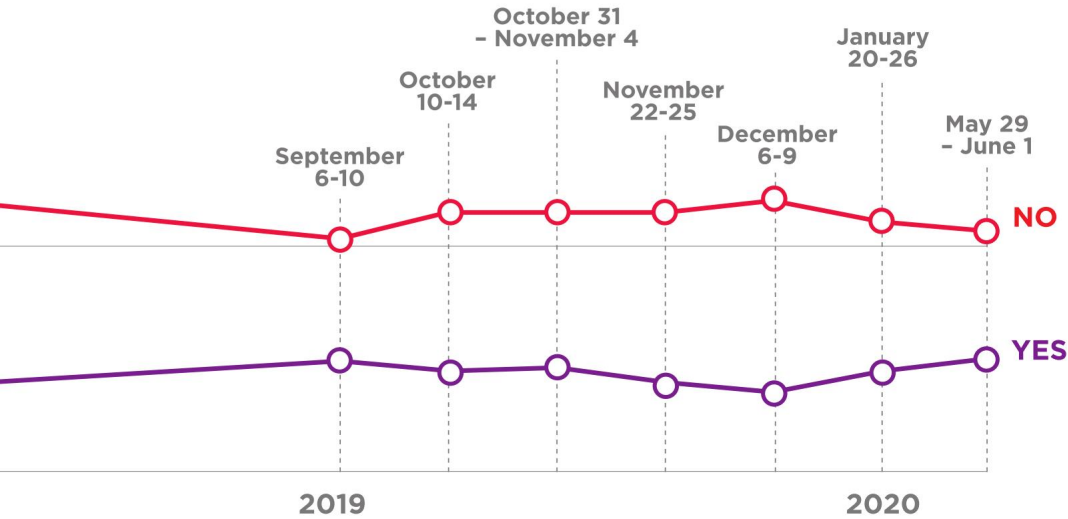
“It’s a great question and the subject of a good PhD thesis,” says Price.

“Go to the fact that Scotland, of course, even after its Act of Union of 1707 retained many of the other key institutions of Scottish society. An entirely separate education system, an entirely separate legal system. So many of those trappings of statehood, if you like, continued in Scotland, whereas in Wales the last vestiges that remained in 1536 were got rid of, by and large.

“Wales is an ancient country but a very new nation, in a political sense. The Welsh state is only 20 years old. The confidence in Welsh political statehood, if you like, is going to be lower and that reflects itself in the support for independence.

“It’s easier to conceive of an independent Scotland because all these other institutions already exist, whereas in Wales we weren’t starting from scratch but we were starting at a lower level of people’s kind of understanding or belief in our ability to do things for ourselves in a whole variety of different arenas.”

Yet earlier this month a Welsh Barometer poll showed the highest-ever level of support for independence, at 25%. Something is stirring. Price, ironically, thinks Brexit here was a catalyst, that asking people if they want an independent Wales within the EU produces an even bigger score.



Source: YouGov

EXPERTISE



Mitch Benn

Comedian,
Musician,
Writer



I've come to something of a realisation in the last week or so: we do not, at this moment, have a government in the country.

We have a prime minister, when he can be bothered to turn up; we have ministers and secretaries of state, MPs, civil servants and all the other ingredients of government. We have, in other words, an *administration*, but what we do not actually have right now is a *government*.

What we have instead is a public relations department. A communications team in search of a government. This is why we're opening up the country despite the fact that we're still dying in our hundreds. This is why statistics suggest our Covid deaths per day are now outnumbering those of all the EU nations combined. This is why we have nearly half as many virus casualties as the United States despite having only one sixth the population. We're not being governed. We're being marketed to.

Don't get me wrong; it's not the case that the administration actually wants Britons to succumb to the virus. It's making them look bad. And they'd love to get the virus under control, because it would poll well and make them look good.

The primary – indeed, one could be forgiven for thinking the sole – purpose of this administration seems to be to win

the news cycle for the next 24 hours. That's it. Just announce – or better yet, leak (so much more deniability that way) some bit of vague good news, some morsel of stiff-upper lipped happy talk, such as might be sufficient to get the word "HURRAH" to appear on the front page of the *Daily Express*. Some hint that things are, in some unspecified way, about to get better.

Then, a few days later, when this 'good news' turns out to be completely spurious, simply leak another bit of spurious good news in the knowledge that the loyal press will trumpet this new prediction of Better Things Around The Corner rather than follow up on why the last one didn't happen. And so on, and so on.

The trouble is that, as ever, careless talk costs lives. Actions have consequences. Early last month, news leaked of a potential relaxation of the lockdown rules just before the 75th anniversary of VE Day, presumably to take the sting out of the Churchill-obsessed Boris Johnson having to preside over a muted, tempered 'celebration' of his hero's finest hour.

Unfortunately, this 'announcement', coupled with coverage of the anniversary in the press, led a lot of good people to conclude – wrongly – that restrictions had in fact been lifted for the occasion, leading to photos all over the internet of revellers conga-ing underneath Union Jack bunting while full lockdown was still ostensibly in force.

So that's why the prime minister's "stay alert" address to the nation in early May, in contrast to his sober, concise message in March announcing the beginning of lockdown, was such a torrent of obfuscation and waffle. He was trying to follow up on a statement which hadn't been made; explain changes which hadn't

IN IT TOGETHER:
A cyclist pedals past a billboard from campaign group Led By Donkeys featuring Michael Gove, Dominic Cummings and Boris Johnson in Kentish Town, London

Photo: Getty Images

occurred. The statement didn't clarify anything because there was nothing to clarify, but a statement had to be made, so he made one, succeeding only in blurring and diluting his administration's position and advice.

And once the news broke about Dominic's Excellent Adventure, the damage was irreversible. We went from a nation undergoing restrictions and privation with surprising good grace to a nation divided between those cheering the administration on and those calling the administration out.

And Johnson, finding himself presiding over an incipient culture war, rather than try to heal the division, just picked a side. Hence the current ridiculousness in which our 'leader' allows himself to appear more concerned over the fate of bronze statues of dead people than over the fate of the thousands of real flesh and blood people who have died – perhaps needlessly – on his watch.

But huffing about statues plays well to the base, and that's all that matters now. Likewise, the increasingly absurd Michael Gove's announcement that there will be no extension of the Brexit transition period.

He proudly declared his intention to drive this country off a cliff, because to do otherwise would upset the Brexit Massive, and that – again – is what matters now.

In a democracy, a government will, inevitably, sometimes be torn between doing the right thing and looking good. But this isn't a government. It's a PR team, and it has no notion of anything except trying to look good.

Actions do have consequences. But for our part-time prime minister and his fake government, consequences are things that happen to other people.

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EUROFILE



CRUCIBLE OF PUNK

GLIMPSES OF A NOW-VANISHED NIGHTLIFE

In the 1970s two New York venues were at the beating heart of a culture that spread around the world. **GARTH CARTWRIGHT** talks to the photographer who captured the scene



EMERGING
SCENE: CBGB in
Manhattan's East
Village, 1983

Photo: Getty
Images

scene appeared moribund. The Velvet Underground had long since split and Lou Reed's solo career was misfiring. The New York Dolls had been the toast of the town but, after two critically praised yet low-selling albums, they disintegrated. Only Kiss – yes, the wretched Gene Simmons-led panto metal band – had achieved any degree of success.

Yet two small rock clubs, Max's Kansas City and CBGB, were throbbing to the sound of fearless young bands.

Max's first opened in the mid-1960s, serving as home for both Warhol's crowd and many bands (The Velvets played their final gigs with Reed there), before closing in late-1974. Reopening in

1975, Max's now focused on booking the new bands then playing CBGB.

Hilly Kristal opened CBGB in 1973 and, by 1975, his club was the cognoscenti's choice. When forced to close in October 2006, CBGB was an American institution and the world's most famous rock club. Kristal would die of cancer a year later and has since been played by Alan Rickman in 2013 biopic *CBGB* (don't bother, its dire).

New York to the core, Kristal moved from being a jobbing musician to working in jazz clubs to opening his own bar, Hilly's, in 1966. He lost this in 1973 due to complaints about noise,

New York City in the early-1970s was dirty, decrepit, violent and hugely creative. Back then the Big Apple served as the epicentre of US arts – with Andy Warhol as its peroxide wig prince – and letters (Norman Mailer as the two-fisted magus of that scene).

At the same time Martin Scorsese was using the neighbourhoods he grew up in as backdrops for some of American cinema's fiercest films. Oddly, for a city that had been home to so much great jazz and R&B, doo-wop and girl groups (The Ronettes, The Crystals, The Shangri-Las), its rock

EUROFILE MUSIC

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shifting to 315 Bowery, off Bleecker Street, and taking over a dive bar, renaming it CBGB & OMFUG.

The club's full name stands for "country bluegrass blues & other music for uplifting gormandizers". Both by location – the Bowery was NYC's Skid Row, home to homeless alcoholics and vagrants – and music format, it appeared doomed.

In early-1974 Tom Verlaine and Richard Hell asked Hilly if their fledgling band, Television, could play CBGB. Hilly gave Television a Sunday night residency and the youths built CBGB's stage.

On it, American rock began to reinvent itself. Manhattan had few venues that regularly offered new bands the opportunity to play and Kristal's openness to bands playing original material – no matter how raw or inept – ensured CBGB served as an incubator.

Amongst the fledgling rockers playing CBGB were Patti Smith, confrontational electronic duo Suicide, transsexual rocker Wayne County and The Ramones, who performed their first ever gigs here. The Heartbreakers, Mink De Ville, Talking Heads and Blondie all followed.

US magazines *Rock Scene*, *New York Rocker* and *Creem* began championing "the Max's and CBGB's scene" and, when Patti Smith released her debut album *Horses* in November 1975, the promise crystallised.

Malcolm McLaren briefly based himself in NYC in 1975 as he tried to hold the New York Dolls together. He failed at this but used his time wisely, studying the bands playing CBGB and Max's.

Back home he set about employing the Bowery aesthetic as manager of a group of London teenagers calling themselves the Sex Pistols.

In 1976, a *Live At CBGB's* double album was released showcasing eight bands. Meanwhile, Television and the Ramones released debut albums to critical acclaim, if little commercial impact. 'Punk rock' became a media byword: while in Britain there was a certain uniformity, almost all the CBGB's bands created highly assured and very individual music.

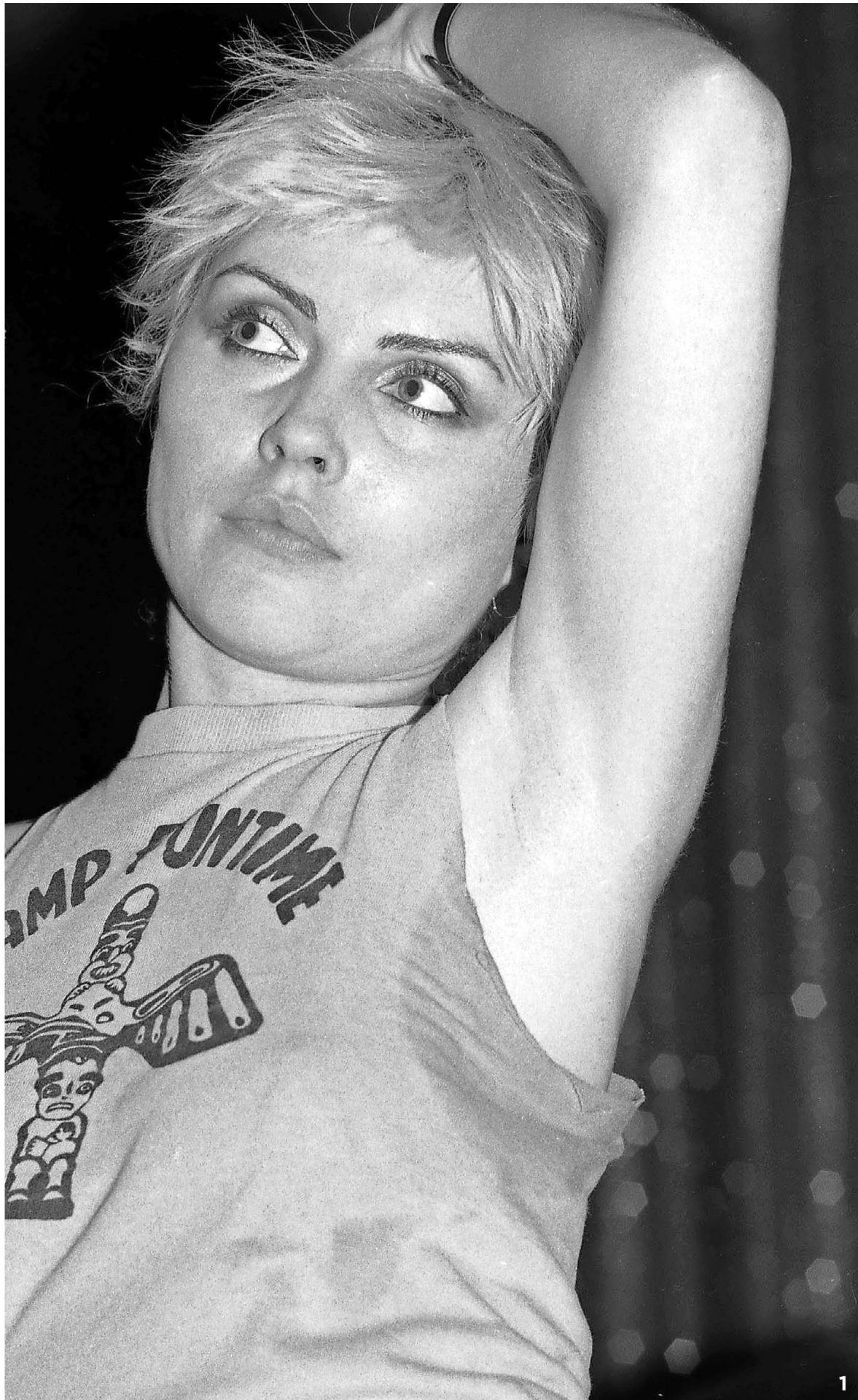
By 1979 both Blondie and Talking Heads would be enjoying global stardom while Patti Smith, Television, The Ramones, Mink DeVille and others came to command iconic status.

The original CBGB bands moved on but Kristal stayed put, continuing to champion rock's noisy edge: he and his club developed into a much loved emblem of NYC's abrasive energies (Kristal opened a CBGB's store to sell branded merchandise). Meanwhile Max's closed in 1981, its founder Mickey Ruskin dying in 1983.

I interviewed Kristal in 2002 when he visited London to promote the CD compilation, *CBGB's and the Birth of US Punk*, and he happily admitted initially feeling both Television and The Ramones were "dreadful". Was he proud of his achievements? Certainly, but prouder of how the CBGB bands had gone on to influence others. Patti Smith, he noted, kicked open the door for women in rock.

Now there's *When Midnight Comes Around*, a book of Gary Green's photographs documenting the musicians, workers, audiences and cityscape surrounding CBGB and Max's in the mid-1970s.

The images are in black and white, and raw as a wound. Many are portraits and



MUSIC **EUROFILE****MAX'S KANSAS CITY**

The older of the two venues, it opened in 1965. The name purportedly comes from a discussion owner Mickey Ruskin had with the poet Joel Oppenheimer, a regular at another of his venues, the Ninth Circle. Oppenheimer told Ruskin the new venture should have Kansas City in the name, because when he was younger all the best steakhouses had the words on their menu, as the best steak was Kansas City-cut. It has been suggested that "Max" referred to another poet, Max Finstein, but Oppenheimer claims the origin was simpler. "'Wouldn't you eat at a place called Max's?', I said, 'Mickey, believe me, it's Max's Kansas City.'"

The bar and restaurant became one of downtown's premier social hubs. It had large abstract art hung on the white walls, including a Frank Stella painting, though everything else was red – from the tablecloths to the red bowls in which the venue's signature chick peas were served. Ruskin would trade credit for art from some of his artistic patrons. He and the venue benefited when Andy Warhol's 'Factory' moved to nearby Union Square, and its artists and associates began using the venue. It became a centre for the glam rock scene, attracting Marc Bolan, David Bowie, Iggy Pop and many more. The art crowd drifted away, as the 1970s progressed and the club closed at the end of 1974. It reopened under new ownership the following year, becoming a haven for the emerging punk movement. It finally closed in 1981.



PUNK ROYALTY:
1 Blondie's Debbie Harry

2 Designer and dominatrix Anya Phillips, left, and Roxy, former girlfriend of Johnny Ramone. Phillips designed the cover that Debbie Harry wore on the cover of Blondie's *Plastic Letters*

3 New York Dolls frontman David Johansen, Lou Reed and Andy Warhol

Photos: Gary Green

its remarkable to study Green's subjects, all so fresh and unguarded. The likes of Joey Ramone and Johnny Thunders are long dead while Debbie Harry and Richard Hell, both still with us, are captured with their youthful beauty intact.

Andy Warhol and Lou Reed both appear – one shot has them together in the audience – alongside images of Tom Waits and Joe Jackson, both smooth skinned musical visionaries.

Looking at *When Midnight Comes Around* I'm reminded of how grungy rock venues were: cigarettes and graffiti predominate while every surface appears filthy. And the atmosphere is electric, charged.

The sounds shaped in these clubs helped change rock music, art, fashion. And as the world changed so did NYC: today the Bowery is home to millionaires and the raw and the poor; the weird and the marginal, have been forced out.

I contacted Green, who now lives in Maine where he's an associate professor of arts at Colby College, during lockdown. With NYC's live music venues all shut while the streets were packed with BLM protesters, it seemed an apt time to speak on the US's foremost city.

"It really has been the worst period of time I can remember going through in my life," notes Green, "and I've lived through a lot: the trio of assassinations in the '60s, the Vietnam War, 9/11, the subsequent wars and now Trump and the virus.

EUROFILE MUSIC



MUSIC **EUROFILE**



SLEAZY LIFE:
1 Georgie Day, drummer with The Miamis, second from left, at CBGB's legendary jukebox
2 Green's images capture the grungy environment of CBGB
3 Patti Smith and Patti Smith Group bassist Ivan Kral
Photos: Gary Green

EUROFILE MUSIC

CBGB

Located about a mile from Max's, CBGB opened its doors in 1973. The property had previously been a biker bar and before that a dive bar. As per its full name - CBGB & OMFUG, Country, Bluegrass, Blues and Other Music for Uplifting Gormandizers - owner Hilly Kristal had originally intended the venue would host country, bluegrass and blues, along with poetry readings. However, the theme soon yielded to New York's punk and new wave scene, which centred on the club.

In 1973, the city's Mercer Arts Center had collapsed, sending unsigned bands to CBGB. The club's two rules were that a band must move its own equipment and play mostly original songs. It drew in acts from outside New York and further afield: in 1977, The Damned played there, the first performance by a British punk band in the US. As it established its reputation, a storefront nextdoor became the CBGB Record Canteen, a record shop and café. In the late 1980s, this was converted into an art gallery and second performance space, CB's 313 Gallery, which hosted other genres. The club finally closed in 2006, following a long rental dispute.

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"Maine is not as bad in terms of the virus or riots as we are a very rural state. In terms of protests, they have been totally peaceful here. Many are speaking out, publicly and online for a change in police tactics and an end to divisive and repulsive racism."

Recalling his halcyon days on the NYC rock scene, Green says, "I grew up in the Long Island suburbs, went to college upstate, and moved to New York City in 1976, where I became an aspiring professional photographer. After a while, when I really had a good group of photographs, I took them to the *New York Rocker*, which began publishing my work and giving me assignments."

"In those days you could see a set of Vassar Clements or Bill Monroe at the Lone Star Café on lower Fifth Avenue and then easily catch a late set or two at one of the clubs like Max's or CBGB. There was a lot to like. My main goal throughout was to try to make a good photograph that could stand on its own, celebrity or not."

Did I wonder, Green sense then how world-conquering the scene would be?

"Personally, I thought it was amazing at the time and a lot of the music has proven its integrity and longevity. It had everything going for it - great music, make-up, crazy clothes, sex, drugs - that would make for its popularity in the press."

"Being young. Meeting some very cool people. Mostly it was the excitement of the new. New York was an amazing place to be in those days. I have so many good memories."

Considering how grungy the environment looks in Green's photos I had to ask why he didn't include a shot of CBGB's infamous toilets - regularly described as "beyond filthy".

"I just never cared in those days," replies Green. "If it was too nice or clean,



SCENE:

1, 2 Gary Green's *When Midnight Comes Around* captures the flavour of the 70s New York underground

3 Maria Delgreco at Max's Kansas City

4 The Boom Boom Band's Willie Alexander

5 Singer-songwriter Tom Waits

Photos: Gary Green



MUSIC EUROFILE



it wouldn't have suited the music or the crowds. Also, CBGB was on the Bowery, which was New York's skid row. The club was right next to the Palace Hotel, a disreputable dump for those without homes."

Films of the time – *Taxi Driver* and *The Warriors* – portray NYC as feral: was it?

"*Taxi Driver* is the right comparison. New York was gritty, dirty, and poor in those days. You could be a poor artist and easily survive in those days. The apartment I shared with Sylvain Sylvain [guitarist with the New York Dolls] cost \$300 a month for rent and we split that three ways. It didn't feel dangerous, although when you live in New York City you get a pretty good sense of where you should and shouldn't be at a given time. The subways were covered completely in graffiti and rarely had air conditioning working in the summer so it smelled and was steaming hot when you made the descent to the trains. Drugs were all over well into the '80s when I lived on a crack-infested street on the Upper West Side. That felt a little dicey to me but, again, it was cheap even for then."

Several photos were taken at the Chelsea Hotel, where many a musician, actor and writer would reside while in NYC. Unlike CBGB and Max's, the Chelsea Hotel still exists (if extensively remodelled).

Green admits that compiling *When Midnight Comes Around* involved a certain melancholy.

"What's so sad about this time is so many people pictured in the book are gone. I remember The Ramones coming to the studio on 31st Street and basically fighting with each other throughout the shoot. I thought that was funny but they seriously didn't get along. Everybody knows now that Johnny and Joey didn't even talk after a while because Johnny stole Joey's girlfriend. Tommy was really the glue and organisation of the group. And now they're all gone.

"My best memories of those days are walking downtown with Sylvain, getting coffee or Cuban Chinese food. Sylvain knew so many people in those days, either from the early Dolls days or his sweater-making days with Billy Murcia, the first Dolls drummer; that walking around downtown with him was a totally social event. That and hanging out at Max's, seeing the Ramones and Blondie and a million other great bands from then, feeling almost like you owned the city when you were out late at night, and most of all making photographs. That was always the goal for me. New York was at the centre of the world in terms of art, music, and culture in general, and I felt so lucky to be there."

Green is infrequently in NYC these days and rarely encounters those he once photographed more than 40 years ago. He hopes *When Midnight Comes Around* will reach some of the survivors but has little affection for a city now infamous for producing Donald Trump.

"New York is way different now but not in a good way. It's an unaffordable yet still structurally challenged city that is no longer a place where immigrants, artists, and other fresh voices to the culture can afford to live. A great loss, but the world constantly changes and I'm sure it will change again."

■ *When Midnight Comes Around* is published by Stanley/Barker; for more information, visit garygreenphotographs.com

EUROFILE MUSIC

Brescia

A CITY IN MUSIC

SOPHIA DEBOICK on how the city's legacy of musical manufacturing and industry has been repurposed in the pop era



A city of lakes and mountains at the foot of the Alps and 20 miles from the shores of Lake Garda, Brescia has an affinity with the finer things in life.

The plains around the city are populated with caviar-producing sturgeon farms, while the vineyards of Franciacorta, to the north-west of the city, produce a celebrated sparkling wine. This Lombard city of striking architecture – from some of the finest ancient Roman survivals in northern Italy to fascist-era piazzas in polished granite – is also notably the home of icons, from Beretta, the oldest firearms company in the world, founded in 1526, to troubled footballing genius Mario Balotelli.

Musically too, Brescia has been associated with only the best. From the mid-15th Century, Brescia was one of the cradles of the evolution of the violin and home to a dynasty of famous organ-makers. Today, a plaque at the church of San Giuseppe in the shadow of Brescia's medieval castle pays tribute to one of the key figures in the city's instrument-making history – Gasparo da Salò. Born by Lake Garda in 1542, he arrived in Brescia in the 1560s and became the city's most celebrated violin maker.

Thanks to tax returns filed in the city archives, we know a lot about Gasparo da Salò – the money he borrowed from various local monks when business wasn't going so well, the godfather he sublet a part of his home to and couldn't get rid of, his farm in Val Sorda, on the other side of Lake Garda, with its olive groves and vineyards. On his arrival in Brescia, he had set up shop in the Contrada delle Cossere area, a part of the city already populated by master instrument makers and musicians. Florentio Maschera, violinist, composer and organist at Brescia's remarkable Duomo Vecchio, a Romanesque cathedral of rare round construction dating to the 11th Century, indicates the calibre of Gasparo's neighbours.

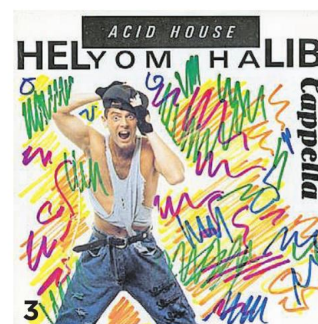
Gasparo made violins of rare beauty, some of which survive to this day. The intricately carved example currently held in the Industrial Museum in Bergen, once owned by the 19th Century Norwegian violinist Ole Bull, gives a sense of his mastery of his craft, a mastery he passed on to his pupil four decades his junior, Giovanni Paolo Maggini.

In 1609, Maggini established his own workshop in the Contrada delle Cossere, but when the plague of 1629 hit Brescia, it decimated the city's craft industries along with every other strata of society. Maggini himself, then aged about 50, died in the pestilence. His unrivalled expertise died with him.

Another of Gasparo da Salò's contemporaries and neighbours in the Contrada delle Cossere was Costanzo Antegnati, the fourth generation, and most celebrated member, of the Antegnati family of organ builders. That dynasty had begun with Bartolomeo Antegnati, a lawyer's son born in Brescia



HITSVILLE ITALIA



HERITAGE:
1 *Apollo* with *Cupid* from the Collection of Pinacoteca Tosio, Brescia
2, 3 Cappella's *Bauhaus* and *Helyom Halib*
4 49ers' *Touch Me*

Photos: Getty Images / Contributed

around 1450, who began his trade at a time when Michelangelo was working on the Sistine Chapel, starting a family business that would last 200 years.

Bartolomeo built organs for major churches all over Italy, including the Duomo in Milan, as well as taking on the prestigious post of organist at the Duomo Vecchio.

In the 1580s, Costanzo took on that same role once occupied by his great-grandfather, succeeding Florentio Maschera as organist. The several organs of Costanzo's construction that still survive across Italy, as well as his masses,

motets and madrigals, and his seminal work of music theory *L'arte organica* (1608), are his legacy.

The 1536 organ built by his great-uncle Giovanni Giacomo Antegnati, which Costanzo played during his tenure at the Duomo Vecchio, still stands in the cathedral.

Some 330 years after the plague dealt such a blow to Brescia's musical industries, Gianfranco Bortolotti was born in the city, going on to give it fresh – and rather different – musical associations. Bortolotti was born at a time when Italian cinema and fashion



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NEW EUROPEAN: BRESCIA

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Canzon prima la Capriola
 Liuwe Tamminga

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 Cappella

Touch Me
 49ers

Runner
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MODERN MAESTROS

While Brescia is strongly associated with early music due to its instrument-making history and being the birthplace of Renaissance and Baroque-era composers like Vincenzo Capirola, Luca Marenzio, Cesario Gussago, Carlo Francesco Pollaro, and Biagio Marini, it has also produced some 20th century classical greats. Pianist Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli was educated at Brescia's Istituto Musicale Venturi, and on winning the Geneva International Competition in 1939, French pianist Alfred Cortot commented: "Here is a new Liszt." Riccardo Frizza, meanwhile, born in 1971, is an internationally successful conductor of Italian opera repertoire.

Cappella's UK No. 2, the Hi-NRG *U Got 2 Let the Music* (1993) was one of four UK Top 10s for the act in 1993 and 1994, and by that time Bortolotti had established an Italo-house empire centred on a major recording complex he had built in Brescia.

Taking the 'hit factory' approach of Motown as his template, he co-opted fellow DJs like Pierangelo Feroldi (DJ Pierre) and Simone Pagliari, DJ at Brescia's Paradiso club and part of the trio DJ Professor, to produce the huge amount of material Media was churning out under names like Fits of Gloom, Fargetta, Antico, Clubhouse and RAF.

Bortolotti was always ahead of the curve, founding the label BXR to focus on DJ-produced tracks in reaction to the rise of the superstar DJ, putting out records by Italian DJs Mauro Picotto, Gigi D'Agostino and Mario Più, as well as international acts like Paul van Dyk, Armin van Buuren and Ferry Corsten.

He launched Media Records on the internet in 1996, telling *Billboard* magazine of his vision of music "sold through the web, with customers paying one or two dollars each time".

After abandoning music for his real passion, interior design (he told the *Financial Times* that his minimalist approach was directly inspired by the many Mussolini-era, Italian rationalist buildings in Brescia, "a very famous fascist city"), but returned to music in 2015 to ride the wave of 1990s nostalgia.

This week, Italian clubs will reopen as the country ends its lockdown, and the Nostalgia 90s night that was scheduled for early May at the Paradiso may yet happen. Lombardy was ground zero for the devastating coronavirus outbreak in Italy, and Brescia has known disaster throughout its history. The plague hit not only in the 1629 outbreak that killed Giovanni Paolo Maggini, but also in 1478 and 1576. The sack by the French of 1512 weakened the city for centuries, and the monstrous explosion that occurred when lightning ignited 300,000 pounds of gunpowder stored beneath the church of San Nazaire in 1769 blew up a quarter of the city's buildings.

Cultural excellence does not immunise a city from the punishments of history, but may provide an indestructible constant that allows it to negotiate them.

was the pinnacle of chic and the post-world economic boom was transforming Italian society, with Brescia itself changed profoundly by the country's rapid industrialisation.

Steel company Lucchini, shotgun manufacturer Perazzi and pioneers of LPG gas Cavagna were all established there in the two decades immediately after the war, and Bortolotti was destined to set up his own industry in the city with similar ambitions of scale and profitability.

It was during the glory days of acid house and following in the footsteps of the earlier Italo-disco that Bortolotti founded Media Records in Brescia and had his first hit with his project Cappella and the single *Bauhaus* (1987).

Its hypnotic rhythm and madcap samples set a pattern for his work, and two years later, the single *Helyom Halib*, which took its main vocal line from Chicago house duo Larry Thompson and Rick Lenoir's *Work It To The Bone* (1987), further vocals from Propaganda's *Jewel* (1985) and drums from The O'Jays' *I Love Music* (1975), made UK No.11. The Aretha Franklin-sampling *Touch Me* by his 49ers was a UK No.1 in January 1990.

STAR TURNS BY TIM WALKER



HOLLYWOOD LEGEND IN NO MOOD TO TALK

When Kirk Douglas died earlier this year at the age of 103, there was quite properly a great fuss made about him. The man who had dared to stand up to the McCarthyite right in America by insisting that the blacklisted Dalton Trumbo be credited as the screenwriter for *Spartacus* – a film Douglas's own production company produced – marked him out as a man of rare courage.

Perhaps no mere mortal could, however, live up to the Kirk Douglas legend, but, even so, I do wish, when I met him in 1991 on a promotional tour for his first novel *Dance With the Devil*, I'd managed to achieve a bit more of a rapport. He was then 75, still virtually in his infancy given how many years he had yet to live, and charming and well-groomed, but he had an idea about how interviews should be conducted that didn't really allow for the possibility of anything new being introduced into the public domain.

All the big Hollywood stars reach a point when there is no territory in their lives that is left untrodden by journalists and Douglas had passed that point long ago. The chances of him telling a story that he had not told a hundred times before were remote and the only interest really lay in the form of words and the nuances he'd employ when he looked back on all those over-analysed moments.

He was staying at the Dorchester in London in a vast suite overlooking the park and there was a queue of journalists waiting to see him. The guy who'd been in before me had had a dimple on his chin, and, as he was leaving, Douglas was telling him that no man who had a dimple could be all bad. I was led in by the public relations woman and Douglas jumped up to shake my hand, and, immediately seeing I was dimpleless, I could almost see him mentally preparing himself for the fact that I might indeed be all bad.

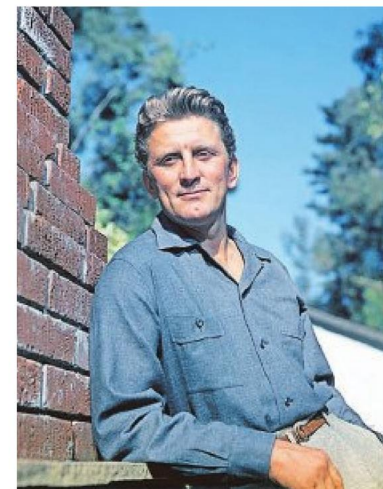
I think Douglas's classic newspaper drama *Ace in the Hole* – in which he played a hack willing to let a guy die to further his career – had given him a bit of an attitude to journalists. I probably didn't help matters by trying to be a bit edgy and asking him avant-garde questions intended to provoke. Did he ever get sick of having to be Kirk Douglas all the time? "No," he replied. Isn't insanity a necessary prerequisite to long-term stardom? "No," he replied. If he'd been a critic, would he ever have been minded to give himself a bad review as an actor? "No," he replied.

So I decided to go for the jugular, and, mindful that Michael Douglas had for so long always been referred to as Kirk

Douglas's son, I wondered how the patriarch felt – this was after Michael had appeared in the hit television series *The Streets of San Francisco* and films like *Wall Street* and *Fatal Attraction* – now that he was starting to be referred to as Michael's father. Did he ever by any chance succumb to just the tiniest amount of professional jealousy? "No," he replied.

All these questions had seemed very clever when I'd thought them up, but they were getting me nowhere at all, so I'd no alternative but to talk to him about his book, a rather formulaic piece of writing about a middle-aged film director falling in love with a former prostitute. He'd had a big success with his memoirs *The Ragman's Son* and I wondered if he found writing a work of fiction more or less of a challenge. "I saw this novel like a film: it was a series of scenes, one after the other. I saw it as my job to describe the scenes and that's what I did."

I finally felt I was getting somewhere and asked him if he had his life over again, he might have focused more on writing than acting? And we're back to a monosyllabic "no" again. The public relations woman came in, tapped her watch insistently, and said I'd only got another two minutes. I glanced down at my notes – the word "no" written in shorthand over and over again – and I realised this had not been one of my greatest moments. I finally asked Douglas, as I was leaving, if he thought, if I were ever to interview him again in the future, he could ever envisage himself answering "yes" to one of my questions. "No," he replied, and finally we both laughed. How very different it could all have been if I'd only been born with a dimple on my chin.



MONOSYLLABIC: Kirk Douglas, 1955

Photo: Getty images

EUROFILE BOOKS

CHARLIE CONNELLY on the remarkable story of Phillis Wheatley, renowned writer and slave



The book reviewer for the *Caledonian Mercury* didn't, it's fair to say, mess about in his column published in the Edinburgh newspaper on Monday October 25, 1773.

"Very few good lines among very many bad ones," he – and it almost certainly was a he – writes of the unattributed *The Pantheon: A Poem*. "The author threatens to continue them." He's also scathingly brief about something called *City Patriotism Displayed*, which is dismissed simply as "an insipid piece of stingless satire", while if Mrs Fogerty, author of *A Fatal Connexion*, had rushed out to buy the paper on the strength of her novel being reviewed she would have seen it summed up in just four words: "Romantic nonsense, as usual".

It is possible this acerbic curmudgeon was James Boswell, who wrote for the *Caledonian Mercury* on a semi-regular basis and had just moved into David Hume's old house in Edinburgh at the time, but whoever it was, one book in that day's edition wasn't tossed aside with a tut and given a dismissive swat in print like the others.

"We cannot suppress our admiration of talents so vigorous and lively," he wrote of *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* by Phillis Wheatley. "We are the more surprised too, as we find her verses interspersed with the poetical names of the ancients, which she has in every instance used in strict propriety."

The review wasn't just undiluted praise – anything too rich might have brought on an attack of gout – and he opened by noting "These poems display no astonishing power of genius". Compared to the other reviews it's a whizzbang gush fest.

There were reasons beyond a good grasp of poetic form and expression that made *Poems on Various Subjects* stand out from the rest. This poet was different. For one thing, Phillis Wheatley was the first black woman to be published. For another she was a slave, owned by an American merchant.

Phillis Wheatley didn't know where she was from. She didn't know where she was born or when, only that it was somewhere in west Africa and probably around 1753. The first recorded detail of her life was on July 11 1761, when she was disembarked in chains onto the quayside at Boston, Massachusetts and led to the slave market. There she would be traded and her entire identity erased and replaced. She was no more than eight years old.

The frightened little girl who had seen 21 slaves out of the 95 on board die during the crossing, was given the name Phillis after the brigantine that took her to America. When she was bought at the slave market by John Wheatley, in order to ease bureaucracy she too would be known as Wheatley. For the rest of her life she would carry as her own the name of the vessel that tore her from her homeland and the family who purchased her at a market selling human beings.

Wheatley was fortunate, at least inasmuch as her life in bondage could have been a great deal worse. She was spared the plantations and lived and worked instead at the Wheatley home in the service of John Wheatley's wife Susannah. The Wheatleys began educating Phillis in a way unheard of for either a slave or a woman of the time.

By the time she was 12 she was reading not only in English but Latin and Greek. She read the poetry of Horace and Virgil as well as the likes of Pope and Milton, and in her mid-teens began writing verses of her own, reciting them for the entertainment of the Wheatleys' dinner guests and seeing them published in local newspapers.

Early poems suggest the education Phillis received had emphasised her apparent good fortune in being brought to America and schooled in the Christian tradition. They make uncomfortable reading today.

"'Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land, Taught my benighted soul to understand, That there's a God," begins *On Being Brought from Africa to America*, while one of her earliest poems, written when she was about 14, contains the lines:

'Twas not long since I left my native shore

*The land of errors, and Egyptian gloom:
Father of mercy, 'twas thy gracious hand*

Brought me in safety from those dark abodes.

In 1773 John's son Nathaniel Wheatley travelled to England on business and it was decided Phillis would accompany him. Her health was never particularly good, it seems likely she suffered from asthma, and it was felt the voyage and change of climate might ease her symptoms. Mostly, however, Susannah Wheatley felt that Phillis' collected poems stood a better chance of being published in London than they did in America.

The previous year advertisements had appeared in the Boston press seeking subscribers to fund publication of Phillis' poetry in book form. The reaction took the Wheatleys by surprise. Instead of pledges from the local cultural elite there was a barrage of accusations. There was no way, the city's white literati harrumphed, that a slave girl was capable of writing verse, let alone lines of such quality, insight and learning.

A board of enquiry was convened and Phillis had questions barked at her by a panel of white men. She held her own. It was conceded that she probably was the author of the poems after all but even leaving aside Phillis' intense humiliation the book was dead in the water.

She already had contacts in London, not least with the Countess of Huntingdon to whom she had sent a eulogy for the countess's chaplain when he died suddenly on a visit to Massachusetts in 1770. A high-profile abolitionist, the countess became Phillis' keenest British advocate and the person to whom *Poems on Various Subjects* would be dedicated.

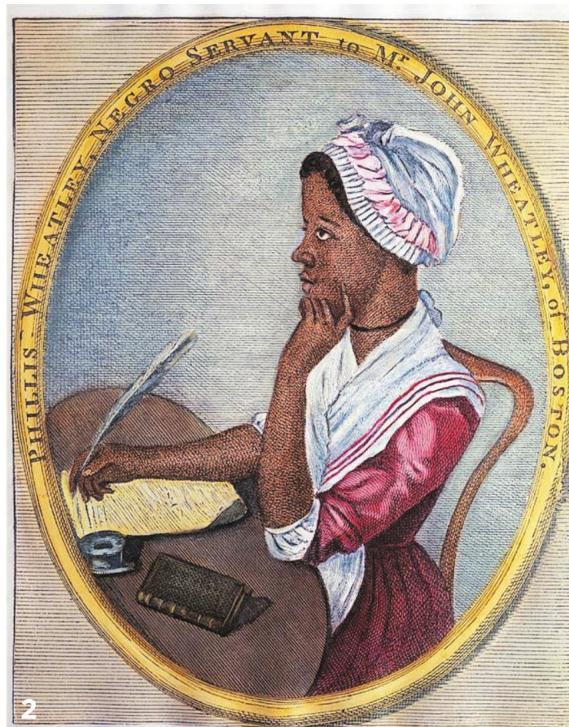
Phillis and Nathaniel sailed from Boston on May 8, 1773. It would be an exaggeration to say they were crossing the Atlantic to a hotbed of abolitionism but there were early signs that the trading of human lives didn't enjoy unanimous approval in Britain.

Word of the slave poet from Boston preceded her arrival. Phillis' poem *Farewell to America*, written prior to her

UNCHAINED POETRY



BOOKS EUROFILE



departure and lamenting her separation from both "New England's smiling meads" and Susannah, prompting the "indulgent tear in sad departure's hour", had been printed in British newspapers before her ship arrived.

Phillis spent approximately two months in England, securing the publication of her book and meeting with several important people including Benjamin Franklin, who recorded that he "went to see the black poetess and offer'd her any service I could do for her", and William, the Earl of Dartmouth, who the previous year had been appointed secretary of state to the colonies.

Dartmouth's appointment, which brought hope of a less confrontational British approach to American grievances, inspired Phillis to write a poem of celebration demonstrating a clear shift in attitude to her displacement and enslavement:

*I, young in life, by seeming cruel fate
Was snatch'd from Afric's fancy'd
happy seat:*

*What pangs excruciating must molest,
What sorrows labour in my parent's
breast?*

*Steel'd was that soul and by no misery
mov'd*

*That from a father seiz'd his babe
belov'd:*

Such, such my case. And can I then but pray

Others may never feel tyrannic sway?

An audience with George III was being arranged when word came from Boston that Susannah Wheatley was dangerously ill and Phillis and Nathaniel had to return to Boston at once. Susannah lingered until March, by which time the Wheatleys had granted Phillis her freedom after perhaps finally noticing the disconnect between promoting her as one of the great poetic voices of the age while keeping her as a slave.

By 1778 all the Wheatleys were dead except Nathaniel who had moved permanently to London. Having lost the family who since her emancipation had effectively become her patrons Phillis

POETRY
PIONEER:

1 Statue of Phillis Wheatley in Boston, Massachusetts

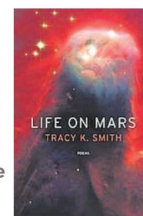
2 Undated illustration of Phillis Wheatley

Photos: Getty Images

FIVE GREAT BOOKS BY BLACK WOMEN POETS

LIFE ON MARS
Tracy K. Smith
(Graywolf Press, £14.99)

Smith finished a term as America's Poet Laureate in 2019 and won the Pulitzer Prize for this, her third poetry collection. Written in memory of her father, who was a scientist on the Hubble space telescope, the poems here explore the nature of space and human life in relation to it, and how it shows up the realities of life here on Earth.

BONE
Yrsa Daley-Ward
(Penguin, £9.99)

Feted by Stormzy as "one of Britain's best writers", Daley-Ward is a former model from Lancashire who has emerged as a leading LGBTQ activist, feminist campaigner and a brilliant writer and poet. This collection is raw and personal, confronting internal anxieties – the poem *Mental Health* is a standout here – and wider issues of sexuality and religion.

I CAN'T TALK
ABOUT THE TREES
WITHOUT THE BLOOD
Tiana Clark
(University of Pittsburgh Press, £13)

This 2018 collection is a deep exploration of a black



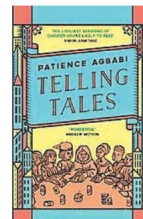
woman's life in the American South. From mythology to Rihanna, these poems illustrate vividly how black Americans in the southern states live with permanent reminders of the racist legacy of their environment.

MY MOTHER WAS A
FREEDOM FIGHTER
Aja Monet
(Haymarket, £14.99)

From the East Side of New York to the South Side of Chicago, Aja Monet's lived experience fires her poetry here as she takes on a wide range of subjects including racism, sexism, genocide, displacement, heartbreak, grief, love, motherhood, spirituality and black joy through the prisms of mothers, daughters and sisters.

TELLING TALES
by Patience Agbabi
(Canongate, £9.99)

A performance poet of rare talent, Agbabi's status as a Canterbury laureate produced this brilliant 21st century reworking of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Shortlisted for the Ted Hughes Prize in 2015 this is "Chaucer Tales, track by track, it's the remix, from below-the-belt base to the topnotch" and was described by poet laureate Simon Armitage as "a virtuoso performance of language, character and story".



married a freed slave named John Peters. The marriage proved unsuccessful and early in 1784 Peters went to prison for debt. Phillis, who had already lost two babies, took work as a scullery maid in a boarding house to support herself and her infant son, but died on December 5, 1784 at the age of 31.

When she crossed the Atlantic during that summer of 1773, her first sea voyage since the one that stole her from Africa, the possibilities must have seemed endless. Mixing with high society in a way she never could in America, her poems published in book form, the first edition of 300 copies selling out almost immediately and providing a fillip to a growing anti-slavery sentiment in Britain, her visit was significant for her and for the abolitionist movement itself.

"The friends I have found there among the nobility and gentry, their benevolent conduct towards me, the unexpected and unmerited civility and complaisance with which I was treated fills me with astonishment," she wrote of her visit afterwards.

It's plausible that Phillis Wheatley visited Bristol during her time in England. She may have disembarked there and travelled on to London, or her ship may have called there before continuing to the capital. One thing is certain, she knew Hannah More,

Bristolian writer, poet, philanthropist, member of the Bluestocking literary circle and committed abolitionist.

Indeed, in 1777, four years after her visit, Phillis Wheatley was leaping to More's defence in the columns of the British newspaper the *Public Advertiser*, to address a sneery critic of her friend's verse.

"I know too much of mankind and have taken the measure of their understandings that I am not afraid to grapple with any literary male in the kingdom," she wrote. "I am a match for the stiffest pedant in the republic of letters."

In 1788, four years after Wheatley's death, More published her epic *Slavery: A Poem* ("What page of human annals can record, A deed so bright as human rights restor'd?") just as William Wilberforce began his parliamentary campaign that would eventually see slavery abolished in 1833.

We can't say for certain that it happened, but it's not too much of a stretch to imagine Phillis Wheatley and Hannah More walking along the docks in Bristol together, perhaps past the exact spot where nearly 250 years later the statue of Edward Colston would be tossed into the water in the most eloquent symbol of British abhorrence for slavery since the Slavery Abolition Act itself.

EUROFILE POEM AND PUZZLES

a poem for europe



PETER SPAFFORD is a poet, playwright and musician living in Leeds. His first collection *Quick* is published by Valley Press. www.valleypressuk.com/book/69/quick
Peter is Director of Words at East Leeds FM. <https://www.chapelfm.co.uk>

IN A WHILE

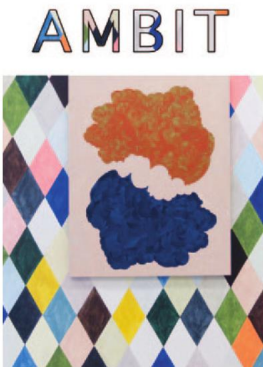
Cock your ear. Hear that?
The bell over Renee's café door, its clean ting
as a woman enters from La Rue de la Croix-Neuve
that first morning.

Or begins to enter; pauses, it's been so long,
then, finding belief, pushes again,
the beckon of coffee, a slab
of buttery sun on the swept floor
reeling her in.

She sits, looks out
through the window buffed each day
these long months, pointlessly,
now gifting again this humdrum view.
The cup arrives on the table, a curl of steam;
small words, a smile, dipping between them.

Outside, the patter of steps on cobbles, no one
whoops or slaps a back but a thread
is resumed, like a bridge of sound
joining banks of quiet,
as after a sleep.

A poem for Europe is edited by Briony Bax, Poetry Editor.
Submit your poems to poetryeditor@theneweuropean.co.uk



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Cryptic 1

Across

- 1. Burrower out to sea? (4)
- 3. He moves and hopes to be engaged (8)
- 9. Remarked that the cake was plain, perhaps (7)
- 10. Long for several months before the beginning of November (5)
- 11. Assemblies at which careers are studied? (12)
- 13. Blooming cluster get there before I do! (6)
- 15. Circle minister moves in (6)
- 17. Funeral speech in 2, for example? (4,8)
- 20. Turn to put four in cooking vessel (5)
- 21. Strong feeling to palm off about one (7)
- 22. It takes more than Neptune's spear to be loud and grating (8)
- 23. It's heavy but will take first place (4)

Down

- 1. My patient will get better with treatment to hand (8)
- 2. 17, for example, could be the French metal (5)
- 4. Not quite a shining unit of circular measure (6)
- 5. Shy to go, I lisp about student of life (12)
- 6. It helps one to do a bolt (7)
- 7. Telephone round (4)
- 8. Put up with being given a loan? (12)
- 12. Was filmed, having been sorted out by tests (8)
- 14. It gives the chop to article in intelligent setting (7)
- 16. No trap for fish (6)
- 18. Kicking, too, perhaps as part of deal I very much want to make (5)
- 19. Work involved in making soup (4)

1		2			3	4		5		6		7
					8							
9								10				
11												
												12
13		14						15				
						16						
	17									18		
19												
20						21						
22										23		

Cryptic 2

Across

- 3. It provides good tips for consumers (9)
- 8. No good thinking too much of oneself (4)
- 9. Betrayed like a bride in church may be (5,4)
- 10. Possibly ignore part of the country (6)
- 11. It's cut from the wedding cake (5)
- 14. Sea that upset a canoe (5)
- 15. Apparently not the top team (4)
- 16. People in office (5)
- 18. God in somewhat horrific guise (4)
- 20. Sustain a dog at home (5)
- 21. Diana could be a nymph (5)
- 24. Such a barrel hasn't yet been rifled (6)
- 25. They may be suspended from the works - for timekeeping? (9)
- 26. An aid to circulation (4)
- 27. Not a new teacher, but costs a lot to obtain nowadays (3,6)

Down

- 1. Above all they're meant to keep you warm (9)
- 2. One weighty measure at the bridge table (9)
- 4. Revolve a pointed pin (4)
- 5. Put oil on some crane levers (5)
- 6. A beast in distress lowers (6)
- 7. It could kill, though not down as a poison (4)
- 9. Travel to three points to obtain frocks (5)
- 11. Nothing hard about this pile (5)
- 12. Reveals the record is beaten (9)
- 13. Looking for loose change, sir? (9)
- 17. Projected amusements? (5)
- 19. Fire at it and you'll probably miss (6)
- 22. A last correction for a book of maps (5)
- 23. Fit properly (4)
- 24. Duck two points about me (4)

1		2		3	4		5		6		7	
8												
				9								
10												
						11				12		13
14									15			
						16			17			
18			19						20			
		21				22						
	23							24				
25										26		
27												

Crossword solutions

Cryptic 1

Across: 1 Mole; 3 Proposer; 9 Noticed; 10 Yearn; 11 Convocations; 13 Raceme; 15 Cleric; 17 Dead language; 20 Pivot; 21 Passion; 22 Strident; 23 Lead.

Down: 1 Manicure; 2 Latin; 4 Radian; 5 Physiologist; 6 Spanner; 7 Ring; 8 Accommodated; 12 Screened; 14 Cleaver; 16 Tarpoon; 18 Alive; 19 Opus.

Cryptic 2

Across: 3 Asparagus; 8 Vain; 9 Given away; 10 Region; 11 Hewed; 14 Ocean; 15 Slide; 16 Staff; 18 Thor; 20 Incur; 21 Nalad; 24 Smooth; 25 Pendulums; 26 Vain; 27 Old Master.

Down: 1 Overcoats; 2 Singleton; 4 Spin; 5 Anele; 6 Abates; 7 Upas; 9 Gowns; 11 Hoard; 12 Discloses; 13 Searching; 17 Films; 19 Random; 22 Atlas; 23 Well; 24 Smeed.

Sudoku solutions

Medium 1

5	1	7	8	4	9	6	2	3
6	4	3	2	7	1	9	5	8
9	8	2	5	3	6	1	7	4
4	7	9	1	5	4	2	1	3
3	6	8	7	5	4	2	1	3
1	2	5	6	9	3	4	8	7
8	9	4	3	1	5	7	6	2
2	3	1	9	6	7	8	4	5
7	5	6	4	2	8	3	9	1

Medium 2

4	1	2	9	8	3	6	5	7
6	7	3	1	5	4	9	8	2
8	9	5	7	2	6	4	1	3
2	6	9	5	7	8	3	4	1
5	8	1	4	3	2	7	6	9
3	4	7	6	9	1	8	2	5
9	5	8	2	4	7	1	3	6
1	2	4	3	6	9	5	7	8
7	3	6	8	1	5	2	9	4

Hard 1

9	3	7	8	5	4	6	2	1
2	4	1	7	6	3	9	5	8
6	8	5	9	2	1	7	4	3
3	9	8	2	4	7	1	6	5
7	1	2	5	9	6	8	3	4
4	5	6	1	3	8	2	9	7
1	6	3	4	7	9	5	8	2
5	7	9	3	8	2	4	1	6
8	2	4	6	1	5	3	7	9

Hard 2

6	1	7	3	2	9	5	4	8
2	3	5	4	8	7	1	9	6
5	8	9	6	7	4	3	1	2
4	7	2	8	9	1	7	6	5
1	7	6	2	5	3	9	8	4
4	5	9	9	1	8	6	2	7
7	2	1	5	4	6	8	3	9
9	6	8	7	3	2	4	5	1

Sudoku – medium 1

	1		8		9		2	
6		3				9		8
	8			3			7	
4			1		2			6
		8				2		
1			6		3			7
	9			1			6	
2		1				8		5
	5		4		8		9	

Sudoku – medium 2

	1			8	3		5	
6							8	2
		5		2	6			
			5		8	3		1
5		1				7		9
3		7	6		1			
			2	4		1		
1	2							8
	3		8	1			9	

Sudoku – hard 1

	3		8			6		
2	4		7					
					1			3
3	9			4		1		
			5		6			
		6		3			9	7
1			4					
					2		1	6
		4			5		7	

Sudoku – hard 2

	9		1			2		
6	1	7						
	3		4					6
5		9		7				
			8		1			
				5		9		4
4					8		2	
						8	3	9
		8			2		5	

Numberfit

Fit the listed numbers into each grid.

Numberfit 1

2 digits: 24 – 34 – 45 – 46

3 digits: 123 – 145 – 232 – 245 – 246 – 262 – 321 – 325 – 424 – 541

4 digits: 1331 – 1341 – 1351 – 1361

5 digits: 52346 – 64366

7 digits: 2565435 – 6334655

9 digits: 115511561 – 122112211 – 113311331 – 144114411

Numberfit 2

2 digits: 18 – 38 – 48 – 91

3 digits: 324 – 343 – 424 – 433 – 484 – 494 – 841 – 941

4 digits: 2948 – 3449 – 3492 – 3499 – 3943 – 4049 – 4192 – 8934

5 digits: 36898 – 54469

6 digits: 224834 – 348236 – 395924 – 692534

8 digits: 39982845 – 89942845

AN 'ISTORY OF DROPPED AITCHES

It might seem like a modern complaint, but, says **PETER TRUDGILL**, this practice has been going on since the Ancient Greeks



The sound represented by our Latin-alphabet letter *H* has had a sorry history in the languages of Europe over the last 2,000 years or so.

Perhaps the decline started in Greek. The Ancient Greek words for 'six' and 'seven' were *heks* and *heptá*, respectively, as reflected in several modern English words which were borrowed from Ancient Greek, such as *hexagonal*, 'six sided' and *heptathlon*, 'an athletic contest featuring seven different events'. But in the Modern Greek words for these two numerals, *éksi* and *eftá*, the *h*'s have gone; probably starting around 200 BC, all Greek *h*'s were dropped.

About 500 years later the same process started happening in Latin, and as a result also in the languages which eventually developed out of Latin. The French word which descended from Latin *hominem*, 'man', is spelt *homme* but, unlike in Latin, the *h* is not sounded. The same is true of the Catalan, Spanish and Portuguese words for 'man', *home*, *hombre* and *uomo* – they have no initial *h* sound. And the Romanian and Italian words for this word, *om* and *uomo*, do not even have an *h* in the spelling.

Having lost Latin-based *h*, French then went on to lose *h* all over again. Starting in the 5th century, what is now northern France was invaded and became controlled by Germanic tribes from the other side of the Rhine, mostly Franks (which is why France is called France). These Germanic speakers eventually abandoned their own language and gradually adopted the Late Latin/Old French of the subjugated majority population of Romanised native Gaulish Celts. But a good number of Germanic

words made their way into Old French in the process.

It is not a coincidence that many of these borrowed Germanic words had military connotations. Some contained the Germanic consonant *h*, and this sound therefore now reappeared in French in words such as *heaume*, 'helmet', *havre*, 'harbour', *haine*, 'hate', and *honte*, 'shame'. But then this *h* also eventually disappeared, although it left one trace behind.

In modern French, when the definite article *le*, 'the', is placed in front of Latin-derived *h*-initial nouns such as *homme*, it is reduced to *l'* – *l'homme* – as it is for words beginning with a vowel, such as *l'amour*; but for Germanic-origin *h*-initial words, *le* is not contracted – 'the helmet' is *le heaume*.

The *h*-dropping story then continued a few hundred years later across the Channel in England. In the late Old English of the end of the first millennium, the *h* at the beginning of

It is this last phenomenon that is generally referred to these days as "dropping your *h*'s". But this is simply the final stage of a long process of *h*-loss which has been going on for very many generations

words like *hring*, *hlaef* and *hnutu* was dropped, giving us modern English *ring*, *loaf*, and *nut*. During the 1300s and 1400s, *h* also started to disappear in words such as *dohtor*, *broht*, *niht*, *sih*, at least in the south of England, giving us modern *daughter*, *brought*, *night*, *sight*, where the consonant *h* is 'remembered' in the *gh* spellings but is lost from the pronunciation.

By the 18th century, *h* had also started being dropped before *w*, so that *whales* (Old English *hwēlas*) and *which* (Old English *hwilc*) came to be pronounced identically to *Wales* and *witch* in many parts of England. And the from the late 1700s onwards, in the local accents of many parts of England and Wales, initial *h* went missing from words like *hut*, *house*, *hammer*, with the result that pairs such as *ill* and *hill*, *edge* and *hedge* are now pronounced the same. Some speakers do this consistently, others are variable, and some speakers do not do it at all, particularly those on Tyneside and in rural East Anglia.

It is this last phenomenon – the pronunciation of *hedge* as the same as *edge* – that is generally referred to these days as "dropping your *h*'s". But in actual fact, this is simply the final stage of a long process of *h*-loss which has been going on for very many generations.

FRANK

Our word *frank*, 'free, open', comes from mediaeval Latin *francus*, 'free'. This was originally from the name of the Germanic Frankish people who conquered northern France after the departure of the Romans. The point was that the only people who had total freedom in Frankish-dominated France were the Franks themselves.

EUROFILE GREAT LIVES

TRAILBLAZER: French
filmmaker Jacqueline
Audry, 1954
Photo: Getty Images



GREAT EUROPEAN LIVES

BY CHARLIE CONNELLY

#152

JACQUELINE
AUDRY

SEPTEMBER 25, 1908 – JUNE 22, 1977

Jacqueline Audry's films were sumptuous. At her peak during the 1950s she produced a succession of costume dramas set during the Belle Époque, most of them adaptations from novels in which the rustle of taffeta began as the opening credits faded and kept rustling until the end: big dresses, big hats, big characters.

On the face of it they seem as conventional as they come: beautifully lit, almost entirely shot in the studio, precise dialogue and grand gestures, the sort of films you might find when you switch on the television on a rainy Sunday afternoon. Indeed, so conventional did they seem that François Truffaut dismissed them entirely when he established the *Nouvelle Vague* that would come to dominate French cinema, citing them as exactly the kind of thing he was reacting against. Overwrought and dull, he thought, perfect examples of the stagnation and lack of ambition that characterised post-war French cinema.

Yet you don't have to examine Audry's films too closely to realise they were arguably some of the most subversive ever made. For one thing, she was a woman, the only woman regularly making films in France in the post-war era until Agnès Varda, and the most prolific French woman filmmaker since Germaine Dulac made her series of silent shorts during the 1920s.

For another, Audry's films focused on women characters who were nuanced and complex, flawed and brilliant with depths, layers and defined narrative threads rather than being mere love interests or one-dimensional supporting roles. Audry's were women's stories, not just stories that happened to feature women. Her leads were great women, dysfunctional women, women who had relationships with women; women dealing with and experiencing issues that specifically affected women. They weren't just there to look for husbands, indulge husbands, infuriate or pine for husbands, these films placed women at the centre of women's narratives. The fact the films looked like standard melodramas made them almost Trojan horses ripe for hoodwinking the patriarchy.

Audry's 1951 film *Olivia* is perhaps her finest, certainly it's her most enduring. On the face of it a straightforward coming of age costume drama set in a boarding school, *Olivia* was a daringly assertive film to make at the dawn of the 1950s. Adapted from a novel of the same name by the English writer Dorothy Bussy, *Olivia* is set in a residential finishing school for girls in the French countryside during the last days of the 19th century. The school is run by two headmistresses, the elegant

Mademoiselle Julie and the sickly Mademoiselle Cara, who are either lovers or former lovers. Either way they enjoy the rivalry they have established for the girls' affections and how the girls' loyalties divide between them.

Then Olivia arrives, a girl sent from the strict, buttoned-up primness of an English boarding school to be plunged into an atmosphere quite unlike anything she's used to. Far from being marched around in single file under an order of silence the girls mill about, chatting, exploring their creativity and personalities in a place where nothing is stifled. Olivia is intoxicated by her new school and soon by Madame Julie herself, an intoxication that is not one way.

Its routines and rhythms may be free and relaxed but the school is not a paradise. There are rivalries and factions among the girls and the arrival of Olivia even increases tensions between Julie and Cara, but as an exploration of female relationships, from friendship to sexual attraction, *Olivia* is a groundbreaking film, one held up today as an example of pioneering queer cinema. A restored print was released in 2019.

Where Audry succeeds is in combining the broad strokes of a traditional corset-bound costume melodrama with moments of intense intimacy that require a subtle touch from the director; a stolen glance here, a sharp intake of breath there. The increasing closeness between Julie and Olivia, the pupil whose welfare has been placed in her hands, might be troublesome in the modern climate but Audry's direction makes the film timeless because the way she handles the themes it explores is sensitive and nuanced.

Although it was heavily censored for some markets – the version released in the UK was so butchered it barely made sense – *Olivia* was widely praised, its thrumming strand of eroticism earning, surprisingly for 1950, only light condemnation from critics and audiences. In the US the film was given the title *The Pit of Loneliness*, a deliberate allusion to Radclyffe Hall's lesbian-themed 1928 novel *The Well of Loneliness*, but even this didn't bring the gatekeepers of traditional morality onto the streets.

A few reviewers mentioned in passing the almost complete absence of men from the film but otherwise the almost entirely female world of *Olivia* was not regarded as problematic or even worthy of note.

Not since Leontine Sagan's 1931 *Mädchen in Uniform* had female relationships been portrayed so explicitly and in such detail, and it would be another 18 years before Radley Metzger's *Therese and Isabelle* would explore similar themes so successfully in mainstream cinema.

Olivia represented the pinnacle of Audry's career and its positive reception was a testament to her skill as a filmmaker as much as the performances she elicited from her actors.

She'd served a lengthy apprenticeship, working under some of the greatest European directors. Born into an aristocratic family – her great uncle was both a president and prime minister of France – Audry was by rights destined for a 'good' marriage and a life of undiluted privilege among the European elite. Instead she was determined to break into the world of cinema and unafraid to work her way up from the bottom.

In the years leading up to the Second World War she moved from working in continuity to become a script supervisor and then assistant director to G.W. Pabst, who made *Pandora's Box* and *Diary of a Lost Girl* with Louise Brooks, and Max Ophüls, master of the tracking shot and a specialist in costume drama who became her greatest influence.

In 1942, as the Nazi occupiers tightened their grip on Paris, Audry left for her native region in the Midi, where she learned of a new cultural initiative designed to unearth fresh filmmaking talent. Although she'd worked in the industry for a number of years she was frustrated that her ambitions to direct her own films had been thwarted by her gender: under the scheme she was able to make a short documentary about mountain sheep being brought down to their summer pasture.

Having something of her own to showcase her talent at last meant that once the war was over she was able to secure her first studio feature, *Les Malheurs de Sophie*, based on a popular children's novel by the Comtesse de Ségur. It was heavily censored on release and much of it has been lost, but what remains confirms her long apprenticeship had produced a fully-formed filmmaker. The fluid camera work and the richness of the lighting demonstrated everything she had learned from Ophüls and the rest as well as showcasing exactly what she had to offer, especially when handed a strong female-led storyline.

Audry's first major success was an adaptation of Colette's novel *Gigi* in 1949 from a screenplay written by her sister, also named Colette, and a film that made a star of Danièle Delorme in the title role. She went on to make 16 films yet despite achieving success artistically, critically and at the box-office (albeit one UK reviewer sneered at her 1958 film *C'est la faute d'Adam* "Tawdry Audry seems to have run out of perversions") she still found herself thwarted creatively.

"It took me five years to convince a producer to risk his money with a woman," she reflected during the 1960s. "If I had been a man I would have been a producer at least five years sooner. Even after my first big picture it was three years before I could find backing for *Gigi*."

Probably her biggest regret was never fulfilling her ambition to direct an adaptation of Stendahl's *Le Rouge et le Noir*, one of the most significant novels in French literature. So determined was she with the idea her dogs were names Rouge and Noir. Overtaken by the revolution of the *Nouvelle Vague* Jacqueline Audry faded into the background during the 1960s. It's only now that her importance to cinema, particularly queer cinema, is finally being acknowledged.



WILL SELF

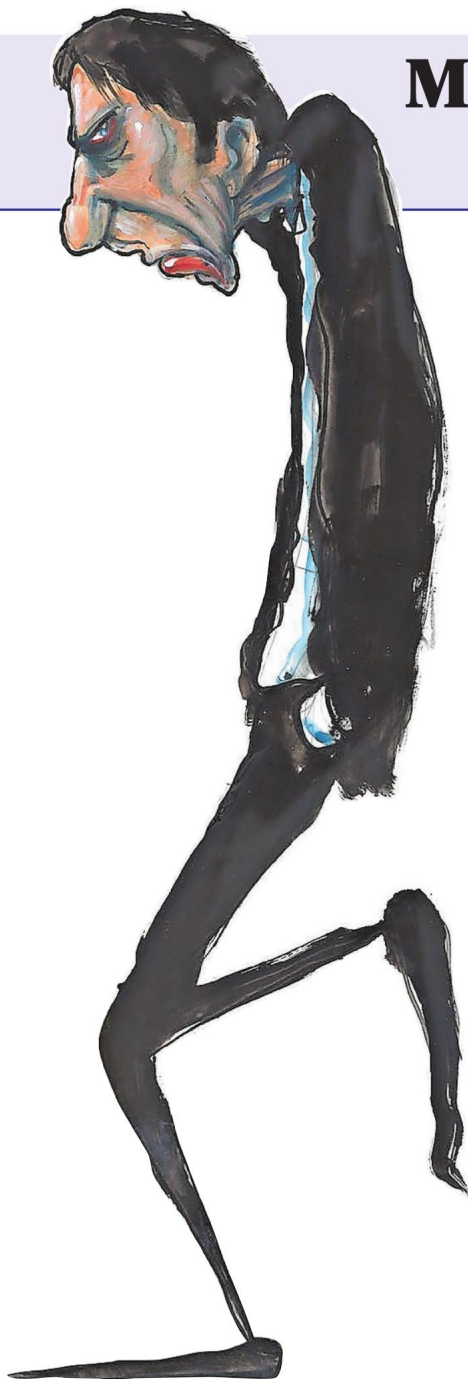
Years ago I had the misfortune to be seated at a fancy dinner next to Conrad Black, who at that time was a controversial – if ennobled – media tycoon. Throughout the meal we argued about everything, such as the divergence in our opinions, our beliefs, and our very *weltanschauung*. Then, at the end, as we rose to leave, he grasped my hand firmly in his and said: “Good! That’s settled then – we agree,” turned on his handmade heel and left.

At the time I understood Black’s besetting character defect to be a need to be always in the right – and little that’s happened since, including his imprisonment for fraud and obstruction of justice, has changed my view. There are some people who will do anything they can to maintain a sense of self-righteousness – including arbitrarily enlarging it to include another whose views don’t accord with theirs whatsoever. And this leads me, fairly logically, to the culture wars currently consuming the British body politic.

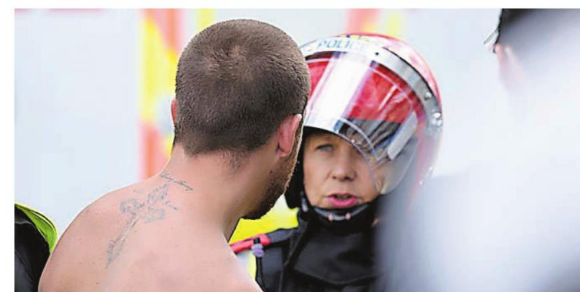
As the two sides of the argument concerning Britain’s culture square off – in one corner conservative traditionalists, in the other post-colonial revisionists – so levels of self-righteousness are rising throughout the body politic, inducing a feverish state within which the greatest crime of all is to be neutral. Yes: you can tell when things really are falling apart because the centre not only cannot hold – but is actively under attack by partisans who claim that if you’re not with them, you’re necessarily opposed.

For the record: any essentialist judgement made about anyone by virtue of their race or ethnicity disgusts me, and I believe we should do everything we can – individually and collectively – to foster a society in which such judgements are entirely otiose. This being noted, a culture – as I’ve had cause to remark numerous times in this space – is a vector that carries through time (and space) commonly held values, together with their associated practices, including aesthetics in the form of taste – and the cultural objects (artworks and artefacts) born out of that taste and those values. The problem for multiculturalists is that they are caught up in a colossal paradox: in order for a culture to enshrine multiple value-systems it would have to cease being a culture, since it’s manifestly impossible to educate young people to, for example, believe in God and not believe in God at the same time.

The suppressed premise that lies behind both multiculturalism and liberal humanism more generally is that of world-governance: ‘human rights’ were a sequel to the establishment of the United Nations following the Second World War, and unless you believe in an omnipotent and omniscient God capable of enforcing divine justice, you must aspire towards a mundane authority that’s capable of doing the same for secular justice. Because no one has any rights purely by virtue of being human – as any of the chattel slaves currently owned in Eritrea and Mauritania could tell you, or the indentured workers in the UAE and China for that matter.



Multicultural Man .. on culture wars



FEVERISH STATE: An activist confronts a police officer during the disturbances between right-wing groups and Black Lives Matter protestors in London on June 13

Photo: Getty Images

There aren’t even equal rights in this country – something made abundantly clear by the disparity in death rates between the haves and the have-nots during the current pandemic.

Even if we did have an effective world government, able to ensure equal dubs for all groups everywhere, what could that possibly look like? Surely, in order to ensure that the God-believers could pursue their cultural agenda unfettered – including proscriptions and practices that liberal humanists find deeply offensive – their cultural space would need to be demarcated. So, this great progressive development would mirror the Biblical homily of the Tower of Babel: we would have built a great edifice exemplifying our commonality, only by that act alone to bring about still further fissiparousness.

Another way of grasping the paradox is that some people are currently passionately insisting on the absolute significance of cultural identities that they wish to be totally ignored when it comes to others forming judgements about them – whether this is their ethnicity, their religion, their sexual orientation or gender. Meanwhile, others of the formerly dominant culture are reduced to a literal rump: obese thugs, p***ing in public and beating up on the police. Both sides are intent on colonising the past (which is, indeed, another country), because neither party is capable of envisioning a viable future. The British culture which was based, entirely hypocritically, on the manifest destiny of white Europeans has foundered on brute geopolitical and environmental reality; the multi-culture that aspires to succeed it will founder on its own internal contradiction.

Of course, neither moiety will thank me for pointing this out – let alone indulge in the sort of radical critique of their own views that might lead to genuine clarity. For my part, I won’t commit the Conrad Black solecism and insist on an agreement where none actually obtains. As it is with Brexit, for me, so it is with this: a plague on both your houses. Metaphorically speaking, that is.

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